



REVUE INTERNATIONALE DE LA CROIX-ROUGE

SUPPLEMENT

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THE SEA RESCUE SERVICE

IN THE NORTH SEA AND THE BALTIC

If a Swedish or another North European coastal radio station receives a distress message today from a ship or a plane in distress somewhere in the Baltic or in the North Sea (even other waters) it is possible for the officers of that radio station not only to alarm—and thus put in action—the Swedish sea rescue service but also the services of any country around these waters by calling coastal radio stations in these countries. A rescue operation can be established with searching planes, rescue cruisers, naval units, pilot cutters and merchant ships at sea. It is also possible for coastal radio stations in other countries to alarm the rescue service in different countries so that a large-scale rescue expedition with rescue units from different countries can be quickly established.

A fine example of such a rescue operation is the following :

A Swedish ship without radio equipment was observed drifting in the North Sea outside the Dutch-German border by a steamer. The weather was stormy with poor visibility. The steamer took radio contact with the Dutch radio station Scheveningen and asked for a tug-boat to come out and take the Swedish ship in tow. After receiving an answer that a tug would be sent out the steamer left the distressed ship. But the tugboat could not find the disabled ship in the misty and stormy weather and as it was not possible to get a radio contact with the ship nobody could know if the ship had possibly

been able to repair its engine and continue its voyage to London.

The owner of the Swedish ship having got a report from Holland about the situation called during the next day the Swedish sea rescue institution and asked if anything could be done to find out if the ship was in danger or not as the storm was increasing and many relatives of the crew were worried. Then the Swedish coast radio station Gothenburg Radio sent a message to the German radio station Nordeich asking for air search from the United States and the British air forces.

Five minutes after the message was received by the air forces in Germany a telephone call came from the coordination center in London to the Swedish sea rescue institution and over the phone it was decided, that the most effective way to find the ship was to send a few planes from London with a course to the last known place of the ship, and some other planes from that same place in the wind direction. Thus the ship could be found if she was en route to London or if she was still drifting with the storm. After two hours Gothenburg radio was informed by Nordeich radio that the Swedish ship was found by the planes with a heavy list and in great danger near the sand banks in Helgoland Bay. German rescue cruisers were directed to the ship. In the evening new reports told that the ship was in tow by a rescue cruiser and later assisted by a salvage tug into safety in Cuxhaven.

This example shows a most effective cooperation between coast radio stations, sea rescue institutions, rescue cruisers, searching planes from air forces and ships at sea. Every minute the year around it is possible to get the same rescue remedies in action. However, such good cooperation in sea rescue work was not possible in earlier decades and centuries. Neither is it possible in vast areas of oceans around which there is no effective sea rescue service established.

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In the late 18th century efforts were made in England and France to create a craft of such a character that skilled men

should be able to operate the craft with safety even in heavy storms with disastrous waves when ships were beaten to pieces on the coast.

Already in 1765 a Frenchman, Monsieur de Bernières, Controller-General of Roads and Bridges in France, invented a boat which would not sink when filled with water or capsized when hove down until her waist was under water. But there is no record of this boat having been put to any practical service.

The first Englishman who systematically tried to construct a boat with increased buoyancy and stability was Lionel Lukin, a coachbuilder of Long Acre, London. He started his effort in this direction in 1784 and his first result was recorded in 1785 when he had bought a Norway yawl and converted her into an « unimmensible boat ». He took out a patent the same year and on the advice of the Deputy Master of Trinity House he entrusted the boat to a Ramsgate pilot to be tested at sea in bad weather. The boat seems to have been extraordinarily effective in bad weather because the pilot used her for frequent expeditions across the Channel when no other boat would venture out and because of these smuggling ventures she was ultimately captured and destroyed. But Lukin built other boats and other constructors followed and in the beginning of the 19th century there were reliable life-boats to be purchased in England but who would buy them and put them into service? No ministry was responsible for a life-saving service.

However in the Isle of Man there lived in Fort Anne an English nobleman, Sir William Hillary, who had the right spirit and enough energy to promote the organisation of a life-boat service. He had seen such a series of wrecks on the Isle of Man coast in the year 1822 and he had taken part himself in so many dangerous life-saving expeditions with far from reliable rescue units that he knew by heart the necessity of establishing an organised rescue service on the coasts of the British Isles. In an " Appeal to the British Nation " published in 1823 he applied to all subjects of the British nation to help and support a National Service for Rescuing Shipwrecked. A member of Parliament, Mr. Thomas Wilson, got so enthusiastic over the Appeal that he arranged a meeting " of noblemen and

gentlemen" at the City of London Tavern, Feb. 12th 1824. At this meeting it was decided that a National Institution for rescuing shipwrecked should be founded and at a general meeting on March 4th the National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck was founded. This was the first organised sea rescue service of the world but soon other services of the same kind were established in many European countries and in the U.S.A.

The life-boat services during the 19th century operated with rowing and sailing boats of great seaworthiness from life-boat stations on the coasts. The radius of action was of course very short, and in order to make the boats movable along the coast—where it was possible according to the topography—the boats were placed on a carriage which was pulled by horses to a suitable place for launching near the stranded ship.

In the early 20th century the newly invented motor was so safe in operation, that even the life-boats were fitted with motors. This was of course a revolution in the life-boat service and the radius of action was expanded to a limit depending on how much fuel could be carried on board. In Norway the life-boat service created a special type of patrolling sailing life-saving cruisers constructed by the famous naval architect Colin Archer. These patrolling vessels went out to sea when the weather was bad and they patrolled along the coast in order to prevent ships in trouble from drifting ashore on the rocks and to rescue the distressed crews if necessary. This service was very successful and much appreciated by the Norwegian fishermen who risked their lives during fishing in rather unreliable boats on the dangerous coast where storms took their tribute now and then.

When the first world war broke out there were life-boat services in all the countries around the North Sea and the Baltic, but no life-boats were fitted with radio, the alarm system was ineffective and most of the life-boats were still rowing and sailing boats. This weakness in the important sea rescue service was heavily felt during the war and therefore, in Sweden for instance, the sea rescue institution built new life-boats fitted with motors and also the first patrolling life-saving cruiser.

Between the two world wars the rescue services of the different countries met at international conferences to discuss how to make the service more effective. Many technical questions about the constructing of life-boats, fitting the boats with radio telephone and other instruments and how to make the alarm system work fast and reliably were discussed at these conferences and with very good results. It was also decided that neighbour countries should get in contact with each other in order to establish a closer cooperation in the rescue service.

During the second world war unfortunately the rescue services were still not ready to meet the terrible happenings in the North Sea and the Baltic. In all the countries there were very seaworthy life-boats, many of them propelled by motors, but there was not a sufficient number of such boats, and they were mostly constructed for shipwrecks on the coast and therefore built for a low speed (7-9 knots). They were not built for hurrying out at high speed to rescue air pilots shot down over the sea or to hurry out to a torpedoed ship or a ship striking a mine where every lost minute could be fatal. During the war the military services built up special rescue agencies with very effective air-sea rescue planes and speedy rescue boats, but these agencies were not in being in the first war years and therefore the losses at sea of human lives were much heavier than they could have been if the rescue services had been expanded earlier.

Around Sweden many accidents at sea occurred during these war years because shipping was going along the coast in the territorial waters and in winter storms and in snow or fog, it is quite natural, with more accidents when the ships are operating so close to the dangerous coast. Many ships also were sunk by bombing, torpedoing and mines outside the Swedish waters and therefore it was also heavily felt in Sweden that the rescue service had not resources enough to meet so many great accidents and where often speed and electronic devices were of the greatest need. During the last war years and after the war the Swedish sea rescue institution built new very effective rescue boats and rescue cruisers. These cruisers

were then fitted with radio telephone, radio direction finding instruments and echo sounding instruments; all this, of course, increased their possibilities of rendering help. But still more important steps were taken. When radar was released for civil use and manufactured at a possible cost the rescue cruisers were fitted with this instrument. In 1946 the sea rescue institution applied to the Swedish Telecommunication Board asking that the coastal radio stations be given the authority to alarm and ask for the help of all organisations in the country having the possibility to take part in rescue expeditions and render help, that is the Navy, the Air Force, the Sea Rescue Institution, the Pilot Service, the Custom service, the ambulance service, the medical service (doctors and hospitals in cities along the coast) etc.

The Telecommunication Board said yes and also agreed to introduce the telephone call *Sea Rescue*, so that everybody seeing a plane or a ship accident on the coast can just take the telephone and call *Sea Rescue* and he will be connected with the coast radio station with highest priority; there he can tell what he has seen, or if there is a severe sick case on the coast or a yacht or a fishing boat missing, and the radio station will call for the right action by the organisation which has the right remedies for the special case. All the above mentioned authorities agreed to accept calls and advices from the coast radio stations and the officer belonging to these organisations receiving such a call is responsible for the action he is taking with the remedies he has at his disposal. The radio stations are not giving orders but just stating what had happened and which steps are needed and keeping communication with and between the units taking part in help expeditions.

The 1st of July 1947 this new and effective method of calling rescue units started and it has shown its great possibilities. The radio stations are the natural coordination centers as they originally were designed for the safety of shipping and they still are, even if the exchange of telegrams and telephone calls between ships and shore is now taking most of the operators' work. But they are always listening on the distress frequencies 24 hours a day the year round. In Sweden the experience from

this service is very positive and Sweden has also recommended the system at international conferences.

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Now there is a difference in the task for the rescue service in different countries depending on the structure of the coastline. All services bring now and then sick persons from ships at sea to hospital ashore but in countries with many islands outside the coast there is a great need for such transports, for bringing mail, medicine, foods and other supplies when the islands are isolated by hard storms or ice, and then it is quite natural that the rescue service fulfils this mission. In particular the rescue services around the Baltic have rescue boats constructed for operating in difficult ice situations and for transporting sick persons.

In Sweden the rescue service has given life-boat men special training in giving first aid to injured persons and on the inhabited islands some women are voluntarily employed as Samaritans to accompany the rescue cruiser when transporting severely sick persons, in order to treat the patient eventually after directions received over the radio telephone from the nearest hospital.

At the international life-boat conference in Ostend, 1951, Sweden submitted a proposal that all the services represented should give a sum of money to an appointed technical committee which, with the help of skilled naval architects would construct two seaworthy rescue boats with a speed of at least 15 knots. The proposal was rejected, but the German delegation declared that their institution had decided to try to construct such a boat. The German and the Swedish Institutions cooperated closely and exchanged viewpoints about the best way to solve the problem but they constructed their first speedy boat along different lines. However they were both successful and have very reliable and seaworthy ships with a speed between 15 and 20 knots.

The German institution has, since the first one, built 2 more of the same type and is still planning more cruisers of that type.

The Swedish institution is planning two or three ships with still higher speed but lighter and not so strong. That means that these new rescue boats will not be quite suitable for boarding wrecks in rough weather but they will be most suitable for rushing out—when the weather is not too hard—to plane accidents or to ship accidents far out at sea and rescuing distressed persons. These ships are very scarcely equipped inside and the only furniture is stretchers.

In most nations around the North Sea and the Baltic speedy ships able and suitable to rush out to help at sea are available from the Navies and the Air Forces. Thus the rescue services are fairly well equipped with different means for establishing the most effective rescue expedition according to the nature of the case and the weather situation.

It is of course of great importance that an internationally cooperating sea rescue service is established during peace and war. The means in use in the rescue services during peace will most probably be insufficient in time of armed conflicts. In Sweden for instance it is planned that the rescue service in time of armed conflicts will hire some pleasure crafts and fishing boats in order to increase the number of units for rescue purposes. These boats will then be fitted with the necessary instruments and remedies for such transport and rescue work and they will be notified to parties to the conflict according to the rules in the second Geneva Convention of 1949.

It is of course vital for an effective rescue organisation that there are means for calling the organisation when somebody needs help. Nowadays all big ships, most airplanes and many smaller ships have radio which makes it possible for the crew to send out a distress signal. But thousands and thousands of fishing boats and pleasure craft have no such instruments. The experience of the Swedish institution is that loss of lives at sea nowadays are caused mostly by lack of means for calling the rescue service. Therefore the institution has asked the electronic industry for years if it is not possible to produce a small simple and cheap radio transmitter automatically transmitting a special distress signal which can be received by receivers ashore or in planes and ships.

Now such a transmitter is invented and also put in use in the British Royal Airforce and in other air forces of the Commonwealth. The Swedish sea rescue institution has asked the factory to produce a simpler and cheaper civilian version of the instrument which can be used by fishermen and yachtsmen and also alpinists. During the autumn 1958 and in January 1959, the simplified version was tried on the Swedish coast together with receiving instruments. The trials were positive and in a near future the sea rescue institution is going to establish the system on the Swedish coast by placing alarm receivers in light towers on the coast and receiving homing instruments in planes and rescue cruisers in some areas around the coast, which areas shall be expanded year by year. The institution will also make propaganda among fishermen and yachtsmen for buying the transmitting instruments. It will also recommend at the Sea Rescue Conference in Bremen that the new system which most probably will be called DIANA (Directionfinding Instruments Aviation Navigation Alpinism) shall be internationally accepted by all rescue services and recommended for shipping, aviation, yachting and alpinism.

When the problems mentioned here are satisfactorily solved the sea rescue service in the North Sea and Baltic area will be really effective and if the proposed system is accepted globally it means a great step forward for the safety of travel on the sea and in the air.

HANS HANSSON

Director of the Swedish Sea Rescue Service

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE ACTION OF THE RED CROSS IN THE CONGO

On the outbreak of the events in the Congo the International Committee of the Red Cross considered making available the assistance of a neutral intermediary in that country. Early in July it received appeals from various sides, to which it responded by sending a delegate from Geneva. The latter ascertained the requirements and relief supplies were shortly dispatched to Leopoldville by the ICRC. Later, in view of the serious situation caused by the lack of medical personnel and disorganisation of the health services, the United Nations made an urgent appeal to the International Red Cross (through the World Health Organisation) for medical teams to be sent to the Congo. The International Committee and the League of Red Cross Societies decided to give a favourable response to the appeal; the teams were to be placed under the direct responsibility of the ICRC. The latter's task will be to arrange for the posting and functioning of medical teams in the areas where they are most required and, generally speaking, to co-ordinate their work in contact with the Congo Ministry of Health and representatives of WHO, acting in the capacity of advisers of the authorities and the Red Cross of the Congo. The mission of the League will be to centralize the offers of help received from National Red Cross Societies and to deal with the transport of medical teams on the spot. In addition, one of its representatives in the area will, in agreement

with the ICRC, attend to the welfare of the members of the medical teams and help to settle any local administrative problems which might arise.

We are giving below the texts of press releases issued by the International Committee (three of them jointly with the League) concerning the action undertaken in behalf of victims of the events ; in view of the publishing date of the *Revue internationale* these press releases only cover periods up to the beginning of August.

July 15, 1960. — *In view of the events in the Congo, the International Committee of the Red Cross has instructed its delegates, Mr. C. Ammann, in Geneva, and Mr. G. C. Senn, in Rhodesia, to proceed immediately to Leopoldville and to get into touch with the Congo authorities.*

The delegates of the ICRC have received instructions to examine, with the Congo authorities and the Congo Branch of the Belgian Red Cross, what measures can be taken to assist victims of the present disturbances.

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July 24, 1960. — (Joint communication League-ICRC). *Mr. Leopold Boissier, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, and Mr. Henry W. Dunning, Secretary General of the League of Red Cross Societies, announced today that a cabled appeal has been made to a limited number of National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to send immediately to the Congo five to ten medical teams to assist the local authorities in meeting emergency hospital needs of the civilian population. This action has been taken in response to an urgent request by the Secretary General of the United Nations, transmitted to the two international organisations of the Red Cross through the intermediary of the World Health Organisation.*

The Norwegian Red Cross has announced that it will send a medical team to Leopoldville, by military plane, tomorrow (Monday) The Canadian Red Cross has announced that it is sending a team early this week and that it will consider providing a second team.

The Lebanese Red Cross is also taking necessary steps to prepare a team. The other National Societies to which the appeal of the International Red Cross has been sent are examining the possibility of similar action.

Two types of teams have been requested. The first consists of a physician with surgical training and a knowledge of tropical diseases, and two nurses; the second consists of a surgeon, a physician experienced in tropical medicine and three nurses.

The League of Red Cross Societies is responsible for recruiting the teams and arranging for their transport, as necessary, to the Congo. The International Committee of the Red Cross, as neutral intermediary and competent to act in time of war and internal disturbances, is responsible for the assignment of the teams in cooperation with the Congo Minister of Health, representative of the WHO in the Congo and the Congo Red Cross.

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July 25, 1960. — *The International Committee of the Red Cross is now pursuing its work as a neutral intermediary in various parts of the Congo in order to assist victims of the events. Its two delegates, Mr. Ch. Ammann and Mr. G. C. Senn, have gone, in an aircraft bearing the red cross emblem, to Stanleyville, where they have started negotiations with a view to assisting civilians still held in that area who are to be evacuated.*

In addition, the ICRC is dealing with the despatch by air and delivery in the Congo of ten tons of milk powder donated by the Swiss Government and valued at 42,000 Swiss francs. It is preparing the despatch, also by air, of a ton of polyvitamins, valued at 55,000 Swiss francs, given by the Red Cross of the German Federal Republic.

The ICRC has decided, for the continuation of its work in the Congo, to send two more delegates, Mr. P. Gaillard and Dr. J. L. de Chastonay. Mr. Gaillard will be at the head of the ICRC Delegation of which the principal task will be the posting and co-ordinating of medical teams made available by the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

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July 26, 1960. — (Joint communication League-ICRC). *Forty-eight hours after the joint appeal launched by the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, for five to ten medical teams to assist the Congo authorities in meeting emergency hospital needs of the civilian population, National Red Cross Societies of nine countries have offered teams.*

A total of ten teams, of which the first is scheduled to arrive in Leopoldville this morning (Tuesday), has been recruited by the National Societies. The National Societies providing the teams are those of Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iran, Lebanon, Norway, Sweden, and Yugoslavia. In addition, a special team for blood transfusion work is being made available by the Netherlands Red Cross.

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July 28, 1960. — *On the basis of information received from its delegates in Leopoldville, the World Health Organisation has made a new and urgent appeal this morning for supplementary medical teams for hospitals in the Congo, to the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies.*

This news, which has been confirmed by the delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross, is based on information gathered by the Congo Ministry of Health, according to which hospitals in the province of Kasai and in particular its main city, Luluabourg, are reported to be without medical personnel. It is expected that reports from other provinces will reveal a similar situation.

Consequently, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies have decided to launch a new appeal to eighteen Red Cross Societies over and above those which were requested to send help on 22 July. The National Societies in the following countries have been approached: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Colombia, Czechoslovakia, German Democratic Republic, German Federal Republic, India, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Philippines, Rumania, Spain, Thailand and Venezuela. The urgency of the situation is emphasized in the new appeal and National Societies are requested to give it prompt attention.

It will be remembered that fourteen National Societies have so far replied to the appeal made to them by the International Red Cross at the end of last week and a total of ten teams in all have now been put at its disposal. This is, however, considered, to be inadequate and at least as many teams again are now, being requested. The League at the request of the World Health Organisation is endeavouring to recruit them from among the Red Cross Societies.

**PUBLICATION OF A HANDBOOK
ON THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS**

The International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies have just published, jointly, an illustrated Handbook for disseminating a general knowledge of the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949. This publication was recommended by the Board of Governors of the League, following a recommendation of the International Conference of the Red Cross, the supreme deliberative body of the International Red Cross, which groups at periodical meetings representatives of all the States parties to the Geneva Conventions, and representatives of the Red Cross movement, for the discussion of vast humanitarian problems of general interest. This handbook is intended to become what is sometimes called a "Teacher's Guide"; it should, in fact, enable teachers in elementary or secondary schools to bring the Geneva Conventions within their pupils' understanding, since the study of the subject is made easier by a methodical and abridged presentation of the text. A number of illustrations, mainly drawn from the photographic libraries of the International Committee and the League, confirm the theoretical explanations of the text and give tangible proof of the place held by the law of Geneva in the life of nations.

The author of this work is Mr. Henri Coursier, a member of the Legal Department of the International Committee of the

Red Cross. A limited number of specimen copies in French has been published. Translations in English, Spanish and German (mimeographed) have been made to enable the National Societies to see the useful purpose of this book which can be published by them in the language required or, by request, by the ICRC or the League.

Easy to read, despite the austerity of the subject, the Handbook brings, in fact, the Geneva Conventions to the understanding of the general public. The methodical abridgement of texts which form a basis of contemporary humanitarian law emphasizes the guiding principles of this law and underlines the great precepts whereby nations affirm their will to be human, even in the worst situations caused by war or political or social disturbances. It shows the great part played by the Red Cross in the implementation of the Geneva Conventions, which it inspired and for which its moral authority is the supreme safeguard.

Although Governments (according to an article common to the four Geneva Conventions) have pledged themselves to disseminate the text among the people, although some articles of essential importance have been integrated in the national legislation of the 77 countries where the Conventions are today in force and include penal sanctions for infractions of this law, it is finally the influence of the Red Cross throughout the world which upholds and specifies these sanctions.

By recommending this little book to the educational authorities in each country party to the Geneva Conventions, the National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies could give considerable assistance in disseminating a knowledge of the Geneva Conventions among young people throughout the world in the same spirit and in a universal form. What a great material and moral testimony to the universality of the Red Cross !

As regards the sanction accorded to the humanitarian law set forth in the Geneva Conventions, it is evident that this instruction in the principles of the Red Cross will contribute greatly in making them effective. The obligations of the Geneva Conventions are more firmly lodged in the minds and hearts

of men—of every citizen—than in a list of laws or fear of punishment.

Thus it would clearly be seen that the Red Cross is a force for peace; the Red Cross is the symbol of peace, even in the midst of war; though born on the battle-field, and holding itself in readiness to assist war victims at all times, the Red Cross does not prepare men for war, it prepares them to act in time of war as in time of peace in accordance with its basic principles; it trains them, in fact, to remain human.
