

# IN THE RED CROSS WORLD

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## Ireland

Mrs. Tom Barry, the active Chairman of the National Red Cross held a press conference in Dublin on May 6, 1965, at which she explained the significance of "Old People's Year" which she was to open officially a week later in the presence of the Prime Minister, Mr. Lemass, leading personalities and a keenly interested public.

Whilst paying tribute to the efforts being made in public health matters, she stressed the importance of co-operation between all services. Improvements could be made by calling upon men and women of good will. There was still much to be done especially as regards the old who were not in hospitals.

In each area she suggested the appointment of at least one nurse as a doctor's assistant and a chiropodist. On the other hand, a reasonable system of house-to-house visits could be undertaken and entrusted to the Red Cross or any other organization wishing to associate itself with this. She pointed out how necessary it was to provide some years of repose and peace at the end of a life of duty and work. A booklet has therefore now been produced by the Irish Red Cross, whose cover has been based on that of our *International Review*, a tribute of which we are proud, which presents 19 studies of this vast subject under various aspects.<sup>1</sup>

This publication not only describes the methods employed, results which have already been obtained, but also all that remains to be accomplished for old people. The authors of the articles mention above all the lonely ones, for whom at least one hot meal a day should be provided, the problem of heating, as well as organized and paid home-help by those capable of undertaking it. Mrs. Barry paints a picture of the ideal old people's home. A series of buildings in which 20 to 30 tenants would have their own rooms, but where there would be a communal dining and sitting room.

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<sup>1</sup> *Our Old People's Year, 1965-66*, Irish Red Cross Society, Dublin, 1965.

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The home would be run by a nurse who would also care for old people preferring to remain in their own homes, but who would be too heavy a charge on their families. A private fund could perhaps be formed to come to their aid.

At the inaugural ceremony, the Prime Minister of Ireland paid tribute to the initiative of the Red Cross and he warmly wished it all success in its enterprise. Mr. Lemass gave the assurance that the Government pays particular attention to making progressive increases in old people's allowances. He also referred to the question of housing and stressed the fact that the family is a deeply rooted institution in Ireland. Nevertheless, the existing situation demands fresh efforts, since the improvement in living conditions together with medical progress have resulted in increased longevity. At the same time, the population has also increased which has led to social problems needing to be rapidly resolved. The construction of 36 houses grouped around a centre requires, however, an additional effort on the part of each taxpayer. For this reason, a voluntary contribution, as is practised within the Red Cross, is of such importance today.

Mr. Lemass also spoke of medico-social assistance in the home. In fact, Mrs. Barry had shown, supported by figures, that such form of more personal assistance also had the advantage of being less onerous, provided, however, that this was carried out by voluntary organizations in a sensible and co-ordinated manner. For the past five years, the Irish Red Cross has continuously worked in this direction in the framework of its programme for old people.

The Minister of Health, in his turn, then broached this question and congratulated the Red Cross on having drawn the public's attention to the urgency and magnitude of this task to which the forthcoming year would be devoted. He also raised problems of a psychological and social nature for which solutions are not always easy to find.

The Red Cross having fixed the objective by showing ways to be followed in publishing this booklet, Mr. O'Malley exhorted the whole community to support this noble effort and co-operate in this action. Duplication and waste would therefore be avoided and nothing is healthier for a country than to be able to count its old people as positive elements in society.

Other speakers mentioned factors which must be taken into account to ensure the complete success of the National Red Cross Society's campaign, for which the ICRC also extends its best wishes.

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## Portugal

Portugal was one of the first countries to display interest in an effective manner in the international cause of victims of war. In 1863 a number of relief committees were set up which were at the origin of the present-day national societies.

Already at that time, the ICRC (then known as "International Committee for Relief to Military Wounded") had observed the favourable trend in Lisbon: "There is as yet no Committee in Portugal, but the Government has promised its protection to one if formed and Dr. José Antonio Marques, assistant head of the Army Medical Service, has publicized the resolutions passed by the Conference<sup>1</sup> in such a way as to encourage his fellow countrymen. It would therefore be indeed surprising if some Portuguese philanthropists would not come forward to champion our cause with State support."<sup>2</sup>

The optimism in these lines was fully justified as Portugal was one of the states signatory to the First Geneva Convention of August 22, 1864. Portugal was represented by Dr. Marques and at the opening of the Conference on August 8, he had presented credentials vesting in him authority to negotiate and sign the planned Convention on behalf of H.M. the King of Portugal and of Algarves.

Six months later a Society had been formed in Lisbon under the name "Portuguese Commission for Assistance to Military Wounded and Sick in Time of War" which, under our common sign, was soon to carry out relief work both nationally and internationally.

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<sup>1</sup> Convened by the Committee of Five and held in Geneva in October, 1863.

<sup>2</sup> *Communication du Comité international de secours aux militaires blessés*, Geneva, 1864.