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REPORT OF THE NATIONAL RED CROSS SOCIETY OF  
CHINA CONCERNING WAR RELIEF 1937-38

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Presented to the Commission on Relief on June 22, 1938  
by Mr. K. H. Ling, Director of Chinese Red Cross and  
Delegate to 16th International Red Cross Conference,  
London.

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In presenting this Report, the Chinese Delegate desires, first of all, to express, on behalf of the Chinese people and the National Red Cross Society of China, their sincere appreciation and gratitude for the sympathetic and material assistance, either in the form of donations of funds or of medical supplies, which the Red Cross societies and other similar organizations of various friendly Powers have generously contributed to China for the relief of the war victims during the past eleven months of ruthless warfare.

The outbreak of the Marco Polo Bridge Affair on July 7th a year ago marked the beginning of a large-scale conflict, the magnitude of which has never been equalled in the history of the Far East. Destruction of life and property, resulting from the hostilities, has been appalling. Soldiers died in the battlefield in hundreds of thousands; cities and towns which were once commercial and industrial centres have been reduced to shambles; and civilians including women and children have been indiscriminately bombed and massacred.

It became at once an urgent and grave problem to give general relief to the numerous combatants and non-combatants who had been wounded and the huge multitude of refugees who, having been rendered

homeless, were forced to migrate for safety. Early preparations for this exigency were unfortunately infeasible in view of the attitude of the Chinese Government which had, since the very beginning, been endeavouring to settle the dispute by peaceful means through diplomatic channels, hoping thereby to avoid bloodshed. At the unexpected outbreak of the war, therefore, the National Red Cross Society of China was not adequately prepared for the grave crisis.

The difficulty of relief was further enhanced by the progressive extension of the theatres of war from the Peiping-Tientsin area to the provinces of Suiyuan, Chahar, and Shansi in the Northwest, to Shanghai, Soochow, and Nanking in the Southeast, and finally to the southern coastal provinces as well. The war zones grew so immense that as soon as the relief machinery was set up and put into operation in one place, attention was immediately drawn to an urgent situation in another distant sector. Having little experience in dealing with a major international war and having only scanty resources in medical personnel and equipment under its command, the Chinese Red Cross suffered considerable inevitable handicaps. By their indefatigable enthusiasm and devotion, however, the staffs of the Red Cross managed to overcome many almost insurmountable difficulties. Mobilizing the various isolated groups and individuals who sprang into existence shortly after the outbreak of the war to undertake relief work, the Chinese Red Cross took the leadership in organizing the entire program of relief and succeeded in achieving centralized control.

A Medical Relief Commission was shortly organized and put into operation. The first task confronting the Commission was to maintain contact between the front and the rear. Despite the difficulties of communication and hazardous night journeys along broken roads, the front line clearing stations managed to work efficiently under the circumstances. Meanwhile, base hospitals capable of accommodating hundreds of the wounded were established in the rear of the Chinese line, in Shanghai, Soochow, Wusih, and Nanking respectively and staffed with skilled surgeons, nurses, and other technicians. Numerous first-aid units and ambulance units were organized and dispatched to various points around the war zone.

Several of these stations were subjected to indiscriminate bombing, as a result of which some twenty Red Cross workers lost their lives. The heroism and quiet devotion of these men and women have formed one of the most stirring chapters in the history of the present war.

Not only were efforts made in the Shanghai-Nanking sector to alleviate the conditions of the sick and the wounded and to provide, as far as material conditions permitted, relief for the destitute refugees, medical relief was also undertaken at the North China front. For example, medical corps composed mainly of the members of the Medical School of the National Central University and of the Central Hospital did their utmost along the Peiping-Hankow Railway and another formation, recruited from the Medical College of Chiloo University took care of the

Tientsin-Pukow line. On both of these zones, the Red Cross and the army medical service exhibited a most excellent spirit of cooperation.

The second phase of the war came to pass when Chinese troops were forced toward the end of 1937 to retire from the Shanghai area, from the Soochow line, and finally from Nanking. At that juncture, the Chinese Red Cross suffered enormous losses. It had to abandon practically all of its hospitals and most of its medical equipments and possessions. It even had considerable difficulty in extricating its own personnel.

Conditions appeared rather dark for a while. But as hostilities were spread to involve practically the whole of North and greater part of central China, the problem of affording medical aid to the wounded became more pressing than ever before. Instead of being discouraged, responsible officers of the Chinese Red Cross redoubled their efforts and endeavoured to adjust themselves to the changing circumstances by revising the entire program of relief. To keep pace with the change of Chinese strategy from positional warfare to mainly war of manoeuvres, the Chinese Red Cross decided to abandon the practice of establishing large hospitals and create in their stead mobile medical units. To assure better coordination and cooperation vis-a-vis the army medical service, the Red Cross worked out a new scheme of division of labour by which the latter was thenceforth to concentrate entirely on the supply of trained technical personnel to supplement the army medical service, while the organization and management of

hospitals were left to the army service. This new arrangement has yielded many gratifying results.

Meanwhile, the entire machinery of relief underwent thorough modifications. While the Headquarters are still retained at Shanghai, Hankow was chosen as the focus of operation where a Central Bureau was soon established to maintain close connection with National Government organizations having to do with war relief. The original Medical Relief Commission was also transferred to Hankow, reorganized, and expanded.

The Commission as it is constituted today consists of two main parts, (1) the administrative offices and (2) the field organizations. To the former are assigned the duties of planning of medical policy; coordination with related governmental organizations; supervision of the activities and solution of problems arising in the field; the enlistment and training of personnel; and general administration.

The field organization, in which actual medical relief work is carried on, comprises three departments: (1) medical, (2) transportation, and (3) supply. These services deserve a closer examination.

1. The Medical Department consists of five units, namely;
  - Ambulance unit (Chiu Hu Tuei)
  - Curative Unit (I Liao Tuei)
  - Nursing Unit (I Hu Tuei)
  - Preventive Unit (I Fang Tuei)
  - X-Ray Unit (X-Kwang Tuei)

Each of the Curative, Nursing, and Preventive units is made up of 15 technical and 5 non-technical members, with a Unit Leader and an Assistant Unit Leader.

The Curative units are staffed with experienced surgeons of whom five are attached to each unit. There are generally ten dressers and nurses and the remaining five members are made up of lay personnel. Operations upon the severe wounded in the military hospitals are undertaken. Although no complete statistics are as yet available, a few data concerning operation and dressing may illustrate the amount of work done. During the months of December 1937, January and February 1938, nearly 3,000 operations were performed by the limited staffs then available; over 120,000 dressings, and 5,000 X-ray examinations.

The nursing units serve as supplementary nursing staffs for hospitals, receiving stations, or preventive services.

To the preventive units are entrusted the important duties of carrying out prophylactic inoculations, general medical relief work, and sanitary measures. Up to the present, six such units have been organized by the Chinese Red Cross and are performing duties in the northern, central, and southern areas of the country, both to supplement the three big anti-epidemic units of the Chinese Government as well as to cooperate with the Epidemic Commission sent to China under the auspices of the League of Nations.

The X-Ray unit is led by a radiologist who also acts as a consultant to the curative units. The radiologist is assisted

by two X-ray mechanics and 21 technicians. One X-ray machine is assigned to each curative unit. More portable sets with generators are urgently needed as many of the units are stationed in places where there is no city current.

To supplement the army medical service's transportation work, ambulance units have been planned, each staffed with 120 bearers and equipped with 40 stretchers. These units are to work in areas where other means for transporting the wounded are non-existent or unavailable.

During the first three months after reorganization, a total of 49 units were put in the field, made up of the following:

curative units	25
nursing units	17
preventive units	6
X-ray units	<u>1</u>
Total	49

The geographical distribution of these units is as follows:

Shensi	7
Honan	7
Kiangsu	2
Hupei	6
Hunan	11
Kiangsi	6
Kwangtung	7
Kwangsi	2
X-ray unit (common to all)	<u>1</u>
Total	49

2. The Transportation Department. This Department is in charge of motor and boat convoys. Motor trucks are being appealed for; at present there is a totally inadequate supply.

3. Supply Department. Under present circumstances of communication, bulk medical supplies are difficult to transport



from place to place. Often carriers alone are feasible and supplies have to be taken fifty or more miles from store to operating units over broken country. Standard packages are therefore invented to solve the difficulty. These packages are so designed that two of them can be strapped to the back of a carrier and transported long distances without causing undue hardship. The average weight per package is about 40 pounds or 19 kilograms. The contents are so carefully selected that the essential drugs, necessary dressing and operating equipments are all included.

For the storage of materials, a number of depots and sub-stores have been established in various centres of the country.

Aside from the technical organization of war relief, it remains to be stated that some 500 local Red Cross organizations throughout the length and breadth of the country have contributed their due share toward the program of relief and often at great sacrifices.

With a view to enlisting and mobilizing the efforts and cooperation of the leaders of various foreign nationalities residing in or adjacent to the war zones, several international committees have been created in Shanghai, Hankow, Canton, and elsewhere and have been granted special charters from the National Red Cross Society of China.

At any rate, it may be said, initial steps have already been taken toward the amelioration of the conditions of the sick and the wounded in the field as well as for the care of the multitudes of destitute refugees. Had the great massacre come

to an early conclusion, there might be a hope for the early liquidation of the difficult problem. Unfortunately the situation has recently grown from bad to worse. According to latest reports, hostilities have been extended through the Lunghai Railway to the heart of Central China and indiscriminate bombing has again been resumed, with even great rigour, over some southern towns. The appalling effects of the Yellow River floods are being daily reported in the papers and need no recapitulation. In view of these deplorable circumstances, it can be anticipated that many more new problems and difficulties will arise in times to come. In loyalty to its humanitarian object and mindful of the heavy responsibility, the Chinese Red Cross will continue to work to the utmost of its ability for the alleviation of the suffering millions, but, in undertaking this Herculean task, feels compelled to appeal for further assistance from our many friends abroad. In bringing to the attention of this Commission this brief survey concerning war relief, the Chinese Delegation wishes also to have the benefit of its technical advice so that the Chinese Red Cross may further strengthen its machinery and render greater service to the victims of the war.