

We wish all success to this twenty-fourth World Red Cross Day, which shall be the occasion for National Societies to spread humanitarian ideas, recruit new members, raise funds and illustrate the work of the members of first aid societies, of nursing and medico-social personnel and of the volunteers and the young belonging to the 114 National Societies operating today all over the World.

Belgium

Having received an article from the pen of Mr. G. Jambers who gives some interesting details on the National Blood Institute founded by the Belgian Red Cross, we quote extracts thereof below :

The Brugmann Square district in Brussels owes its tranquillity to the proximity of tree-lined avenues and the *Bois de la Cambre*. The Belgian Red Cross has some buildings there in which there is the Medico-Surgical Institute and the National Blood Institute. The latter was founded in 1950 and moved into this building in 1968. The building, with brown brick and window frontage, is functional in design but not without an aesthetic dignity.

By way of introduction we would define the National Blood Institute as the most important department of the Belgian Red Cross National Blood Service. In it are represented the national services which provide for the whole country the various stable blood derivatives, in solution, frozen or dried (Production Services) and also supervision of equipment required by the Blood Transfusion Services for the collection of blood and blood derivatives prepared by the Production Services (Control Laboratory). The National Blood Institute includes also the National Blood Service, a library and the Brussels Blood Transfusion Centre with its various sections for the drawing of blood, laboratory analysis and distribution for the Brussels area.

When all citrated blood was preserved solely for the purpose of transfusions, it was the prerogative of the Blood Transfusion Centres.

The use of various blood constituents in modern pharmacology resulted in the setting up of blood institutes, and centres for

research on blood derivatives and for their preparation and utilisation in medicine.

The National Blood Service of the Belgian Red Cross has 45 transfusion centres throughout the country and 10 mobile units.

Each of them collects blood, carries out the primary analysis, such as typing, examines donors and preserves all blood, about two-thirds of which go to local hospitals.¹

A third of the blood collected throughout the country is sent to the National Blood Institute.

There it is divided into three categories:

1. Whole blood (not more than 21 days old) for hospitals in the Brussels area.
2. Blood which is not more than 4 days old and used for preparing blood plasma.
3. Blood for the preparation of antihemophilic factors.
4. Blood and plasma with a high content of specific gamma-globuline, and blood collected more than twenty-one days previously and intended for the preparation of various plasma derivatives.

From these last three categories the National Blood Institute prepares blood constituents, fresh or desiccated plasma and plasma derivatives.

There are two other important divisions in the Institute.

The *Production Services* include a laboratory for fractionation and lyophilisation (low temperature desiccation in vacuum) and a laboratory for the preparation of test serums for blood typing. The fractionation laboratory is responsible for separating out the various blood constituents and the preparation of an ever-increasing number of blood components used in medicine. These preparations require a series of complex and delicate operations; they are carried out in constant temperature and require strict sterility.

The *Control Laboratory* includes sections for bacteriology, serology, chemistry and hematology and also for laboratory animals. Their function is to check the effectiveness and harm-

¹ *Plate.*

BOLIVIA



Guerrilleros, accompanied by the President of the Bolivian Red Cross, crossing a river on their way to La Paz.

BELGIUM

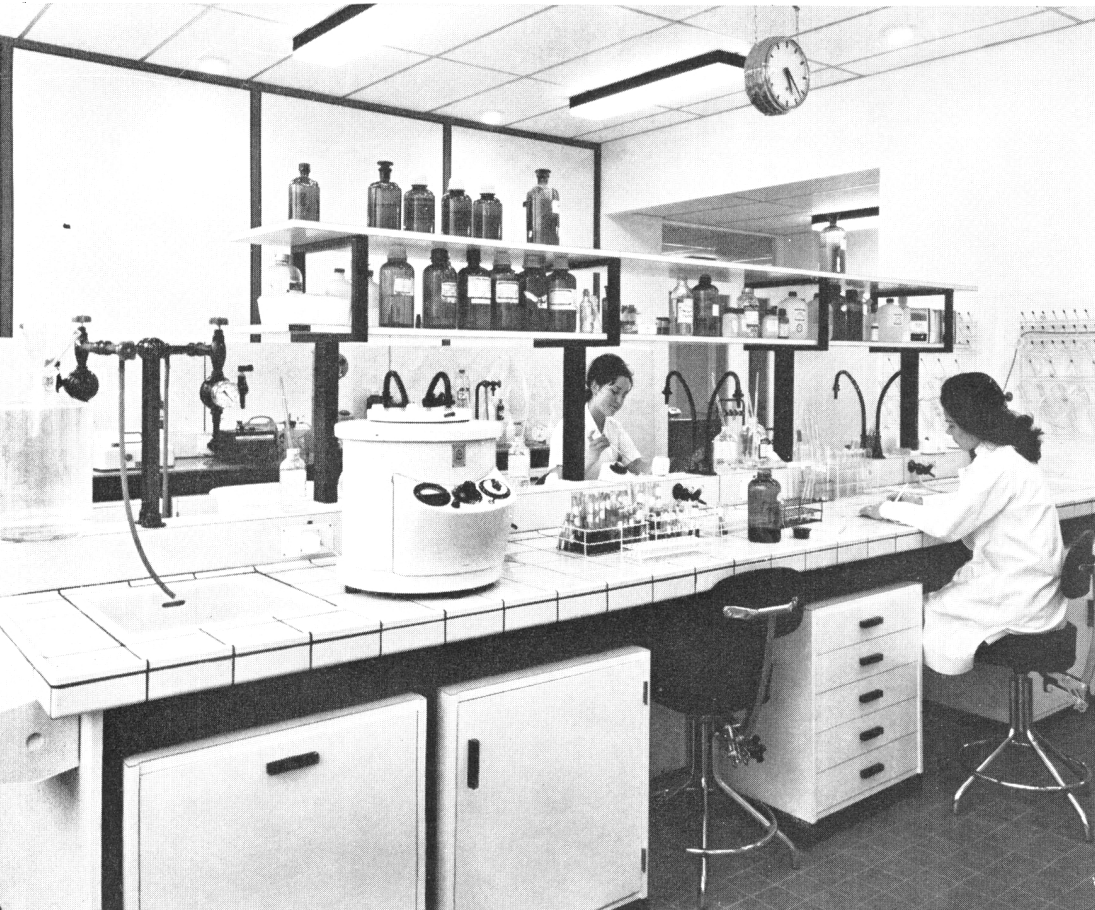


Photo Institut belge d'information et de documentation, Bruxelles.

Brussels: Blood group test laboratory at the *Institut national du sang* attached to the Belgian Red Cross.

lessness of the products prepared. They also supervise the blood transfusion equipment and various analyses.

Although whole blood may be kept for only two or three weeks at a temperature of 4 degrees, plasma derivatives may be preserved for almost 5 years.

The National Blood Institute also has refrigeration chambers, reserves, and a twenty-four hour distribution service. It is also the Blood Transfusion Centre for Brussels and the headquarters of the National Blood Service.

Bolivia

The ICRC has received from the Bolivian Red Cross Society its report on its recent activities. It gives a heartening picture of the growth of this National Society under the presidency of a man full of enterprise and enthusiasm, Dr. Celso Rossell Santa Cruz. One may find, as one turns through the pages of the report, that the Society is widening the scope of its action at La Paz where 800 first aiders have received first aid instruction at a training school. These are all voluntary workers, who offer their assistance mainly to the inhabitants of the crowded areas in the suburbs of the capital. In the other parts of the country, local branches of voluntary first aiders have been formed, or will be created soon, in all the provincial capitals. Moreover, every year, a seminar is held at national level, with the aim of encouraging the guidance of senior members of the Society.

In 1970, in addition to these activities, the National Society carried out a humanitarian action to which we would like to draw the attention of our readers. A full report was handed over to the ICRC by Dr. Celso Rossell Santa Cruz on the operation completed by the Bolivian Red Cross in favour of a group of guerrilleros.

The last surviving members of a guerrilla uprising, begun in July 1970, had taken refuge in the mountainous region of Teoponte north of La Paz. Following grim reports of the precarious state of their health, a commission for pacification and liberation was