

prepared to carry out a mission for a period not exceeding six weeks.

A knowledge of languages and experience of travel are not the only requirements. No branch of instruction which can be made use of in the field has been overlooked. Amongst the members of the GMI one can in fact find, distributed over various sections, not only doctors and lawyers, but also specialists in most varied branches, such as transportation, administration, mechanical, wireless etc. . . Courses of instruction which include numerous practical exercises take place in Geneva.

Several delegates who have come from the GMI have already given much valued help to the ICRC's work in Algeria, Cyprus and the Congo.

### **The Arab League welcomes the President of the ICRC**

On November 24, 1964, the delegation of the Arab League in Geneva gave a reception at the Arabic Information and Cultural Centre in honour of Mr. Samuel A. Gonard, the new President of the International Committee of the Red Cross. Several members and some of the ICRC's directing staff were invited, including Mr. Léopold Boissier, former President, Mr. Martin Bodmer, Vice-President, Mr. Frédéric Siordet and Mr. Max Petitpierre, members. On the Arab side, most of the chiefs of diplomatic missions accredited in Switzerland were present.

The permanent delegate of the Arab League, H. E. Moukhtar El-Wakil, Minister, delivered an address to the President of the ICRC, in which he paid glowing tribute to the work of the founder institution of the Red Cross. Some of the main passages of this speech were as follows :

*The past is a guarantee for the future. The International Committee of the Red Cross has behind it a past rich with humanitarian action in which the Arab world holds high place. Your Committee, under the Presidency of your illustrious predecessor, Mr. Léopold Boissier, intervened unceasingly and in the most effective manner on behalf of the wounded and the civilian population who knew suffering in the Arab countries. From 1948, the ICRC dispensed aid during the Palestine conflict, sending relief and medical supplies, setting up hospitals. This sequence of devoted action remains moreover strong in*

*the memory of those who have read the book by Mr. Jacques de Reynier, delegate of the ICRC, entitled " A Jerusalem, un drapeau flottait sur la ligne de feu ". There was then the Suez affair in 1956, to be followed a few years later by the Algerian struggle for independence. We will never forget the positions then adopted by the ICRC, its interventions, its courageous enquiries and the lengthy representations it took to bring some alleviation to the victims of the war. More recently, the International Committee accomplished its benevolent action at Bizerta and in the Yemen. We are, moreover, all delighted that since early in November an agreement has put an end to fighting between Yemenis...*

*... The flag of the red cross on a white ground, the emblem of humanitarian action, does it not fly in the service of peace in the world? Its colours shed their rays over all countries and give an answer to those who no longer wish to have experience of the tragic suffering engendered by most cruel conflicts.*

*The Arab world also wishes to tread the path which the Red Cross has taken for the good of mankind. Mr. President, the ideal animating your institution has been adopted by our people. We will therefore work with all our strength and wholeheartedly beside you to contribute to that peace to which we will henceforth aim with a common and brotherly purpose.*

Mr. S. A. Gonard then spoke, extracts of his speech being as follows :

*You have been so good as to mention the various humanitarian missions which our institution has had the opportunity of accomplishing in the past few years on Arab soil. Certainly, we feel some satisfaction at the thought of having been able to alleviate a certain amount of suffering brought on by the tragic events of which the Arab countries have been the theatre. Let me also tell you, however, that for the ICRC and its delegates, these missions have not only been occasions of giving aid, but also of learning...*

*I would make a point of stressing the typical chivalrous spirit of the best Arab traditions, since the Red Cross, for its part, means to conform to these. It seeks to cultivate, to arouse these qualities of generosity, devotion and courage which have been the characteristics of chivalry in its finest hours. Some enthusiasts have even gone as far as saying that it is the chivalry of modern times.*

*In the Middle Ages, the Arab civilization had reached a degree of learning and mastery in the field of medicine which even today is a cause of admiration. And if, in that age, the contacts which the West had with that more civilized Arab culture had the fortunate effect of tempering the too violent habits of our ancestors, one great figure in Arabic history still stands out today as an example to the Red Cross movement, that of Saladin, the illustrious Sultan who treated his enemies with a generosity which made such a strong impression on the Crusaders.*

*Arab history also supplies another example of a virtue regarded by the Red Cross as cardinal, that of toleration which implies respect for individuals and their convictions.*

*In fact, at a time when, moreover, so many men did not hesitate to massacre each other because they disagreed on the best way of worshipping God in Moslem Spain, the great monotheistic religions, such as Islam and Christianity, lived together in mutual esteem.*

*Thus, in this admirable cradle of civilization, the Arabs, ten centuries ago, put into practice the ideal of mutual respect which was to be that of the great humanitarian movements of the modern age, in particular that of the Red Cross movement.*

## **At the Central Tracing Agency**

**The vicissitudes of three sisters separated by the war.** — In May 1962, Mrs. Berta B., a German who married an Englishman after the war and went to live in England, appealed to the International Committee of the Red Cross to attempt to trace her sisters, Natalia and Olga. Their parents had been members of a German community in Byelorussia and they had died when the girls were very young.

The community was sent to Siberia in 1940, but Berta and her younger sisters managed to escape on the way and returned alone by their own resources to their former home.

They were sent to East Prussia and Poland during the occupation by the German army. At the time of the armistice, Berta was in Federal Germany and had lost all touch with her sisters.

Thanks to the persevering research of the ICRC, with the help of the Soviet Red Cross, Natalia was traced in the USSR in 1963.