

## MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN WEST AFRICA

As former French African States began to achieve independence, so the International Committee gave its attention to interesting them in its humanitarian work. It was for this reason that Dr. Gloor, Vice-President, went to Yaoundé during the celebrations organized on the occasion of the proclamation of the independence of the Cameroon Republic, in 1960.

The ICRC is most anxious to establish relations with the authorities of these countries which are parties to the Geneva Conventions of 1949, ratified by France in June 1951.

The ICRC hoped that National Societies would be set up in these States and was therefore pleased to learn recently of the Society founded in Togo, and it was with great pleasure that it accepted an invitation to be represented at the celebrations organized by the Togolese Red Cross in the early part of last May.

This mission was entrusted to Mr. F. de Reynold, head of the Liaison Service, who, on the outward journey at the end of April stopped at Dakar where every opportunity was accorded him to see the work being carried out by the French Red Cross Committee in Senegal, under the presidency of Mr. J. Laurens. Numerous African personalities are included in this Committee, and Mr. Amadou Dia, the Minister of Health, told Mr. de Reynold, during the meeting which he had with him, that a Senegalese Red Cross is being formed. The President of the Provisional Committee is Dr. Coulbary, who will be taking over and developing the work hitherto directed by the French Red Cross.

The ICRC delegate then went to Abidjan, where he had the privilege of being received by Mr. Auguste Denise, acting president of the Ivory Coast Republic, who assured him that his Government is ready to support the institution in Geneva. He declared himself

willing to encourage the formation of a National Society by officially recognizing the Committee in Abidjan, which is directed by Dr. J. Vilasco—who gave Mr. de Reynold a warm welcome—and by supporting its efforts.

Continuing his journey, the ICRC representative reached Togo, where he was received by the Togolese Red Cross, officially recognized by the ICRC in September 1961. This National Society, under the presidency of Mrs. Savi de Tové and directed by Mr. Boniface T. Dovi, Secretary-General, is developing actively.

In Lomé, Mr. de Reynold took part in successive ceremonies from May 3 to 8, organized by the National Society as part of World Red Cross Day. Various celebrations, all of them extremely successful, took place in an agreeable and lively atmosphere: there was a torchlight procession, diplomas were handed over to first aiders and presents to Togolese Juniors (gifts from the Junior Red Cross in the Federal Republic of Germany) and there was also a big lottery and a ball, and relief was distributed to the needy. These celebrations were intended to put the young Society on the map and to attract the good will of the population as much as obtaining the resources which it needs to successfully carry out its growing tasks. Because this Red Cross Society, which was the first to be set up in African Countries formerly under French rule, is making rapid strides.

The official ceremony, which was most impressive, took place on May 7, in the presence of Mrs. Sylvanna Olympia wife of the President of the Republic and Honorary President of the Togolese Red Cross and of Mr. Paulin Akouété, Minister for Social Affairs.

The ICRC representative then travelled on to Guinea, where right from his arrival in Conakry, he was given a most understanding welcome and found a real interest in the humanitarian work of the ICRC, not only from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs: Mr. Diallo, but from the Minister of Defence, Mr. Fodeba and from the Minister of Health, Dr. Accar. The latter, moreover, stated that he wishes to see a National Red Cross Society formed shortly (the statutes have already been drafted) and that he will help towards this.

Furthermore, as Mr. de Reynold had already learned previously from the Chief of Staff of the Senegalese Army, General Fall, the

Guinean Minister of Defence declared himself ready to ensure the dissemination of the essential Principles of the Geneva Conventions, amongst the Armed Forces of his country.

On its representative's return to Geneva, the International Committee noted with satisfaction the interest which the authorities of these four West African countries are showing in its work and in a widespread knowledge of the Principles of the Geneva Conventions. It also delighted at the forthcoming foundation of several National Societies and the promising development shown by those Societies already in existence which are carrying out a considerable humanitarian task.

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### **ACTIVE CO-OPERATION WITH THE EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES**

Continuing our general description of the activities of the Central Tracing Agency at the headquarters of the ICRC at Geneva, we would point out that requests for information concerning military personnel and civilians of East European origin, missing during the course of the Second World War continue to reach Geneva in fairly large numbers.

Thus, in particular the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, as well as private individuals living in that country, appealed to the Central Agency to help them discover the fate of Soviet military missing during hostilities or in captivity, to trace civilians deported to Germany or persons who had emigrated many years before and whose families in the USSR wished to know their present whereabouts.

Private individuals of Russian origin established abroad also approach the ICRC in order to obtain news of members of their families remaining in the country or deported to Germany during the war.