

FOLLOWING ON A MISSION BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN CENTRAL AFRICA

The *International Review* has already had occasion to mention the successive stages of the mission which left Geneva at the beginning of February 1962 to visit several countries and territories in Equatorial and Central Africa. This was entrusted by the International Committee to Mr. Samuel Gonard, Vice-President, who was accompanied by Mr. Georges Hoffmann, delegate, for a long time in the service of the ICRC.

This mission, whose object it was to study on the spot the ways of ensuring, without any distinction, a certain protection to the victims of international and internal conflicts, as well as the possibilities of action by the Red Cross on behalf of the victims of such conflicts, stayed in Africa for about two months. After stopping in *Southern Rhodesia*, then in *Northern Rhodesia*, it went to *Nyasaland*, *Kenya*, *Tanganyika*, *Zanzibar*, then to *Uganda*. It also visited *Ruanda-Urundi*, thence to Léopoldville, Elisabethville and finally to Brazzaville.

This was the first time that a mission of this kind from Geneva had visited these countries. In order the better to realize the magnitude and the extent of the studies which were undertaken, we would point out that the mission covered some 21,000 miles. During the course of 59 days of travel, the ICRC representatives had more than a hundred interviews with very diverse personalities from every walk of life.

The mission was everywhere welcomed with the greatest courtesy by the National and local Red Cross organizations, as well as by the civilian and military authorities. We would like to set out briefly the conclusions which it reached and which have been submitted to the International Committee at one of its plenary sessions.

It became ever clearer to the ICRC representatives as they progressed on their journey, that the first important action which

required undertaking was to make an energetic and general dissemination of the humanitarian principles codified in the Geneva Conventions. This should be assured by visual as well as auditory methods, in a brief and incisive form. Study centres should be organized in colleges and universities and one should be able to interest professors of medium and senior grades in instruction in this subject. African would speak to African and publicity could thus be directed to the civilian population as well as to military and auxiliary formations. It is moreover certain that States which have acceded to the Conventions have the duty to make their contents known and in any case to make their essential moral rules understood by all.

It is evident that the existence of a continuous network of National Red Cross Societies with sufficient ramifications in the interior of States is an essential condition for humanitarian principles being widely known, first of all by those in positions of responsibility, then by the masses. The International Committee must therefore continue to follow with close attention the general evolution of new Societies taking the place of Red Cross organizations which previously existed and to facilitate their recognition, which only it has the task of proclaiming. The process of the "Africanisation" of Red Cross Societies is accelerating as the new States progressively reach independence. Responsibilities should be handed over as harmoniously as possible and the International Committee continues to be prepared to assist the Societies to overcome this often difficult step.

In the world effort being undertaken to aid countries in the process of development, the ICRC, like every other international institution, has a rôle to play. One of the most useful tasks which could be undertaken would be to establish training courses for Africans who will be playing an important rôle in the National Red Cross Societies. Those taking part in such courses would be trained in particular to organize the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions in their own countries.

It is essential for the International Committee, promoter of the universal Red Cross movement, to be present on a continent in which so many different sorts of problems are being encountered. It is also essential that it maintains relations and makes frequent

contacts with the various countries visited by the mission, and in which it was so enthusiastically received, which shows how much the services of the Red Cross are everywhere recognized and appreciated.

SUNDRY ACTIVITIES

News Items

Congo

Mr. G. C. Senn, delegate of the International Committee of the Red Cross recently visited the central prison of Stanleyville, chief town of the Orientale Province of the Congo (formerly Belgian). At the time of the visit there were a total of 800 prisoners amongst whom numbered one hundred Katanga gendarmes captured by the National Congolese Army. There were in addition some thirty Congolese political detainees, the remainder being prisoners of common law. On this occasion Mr. Senn was given considerable facilities by the local authorities and especially by General Lundula, Commander of the Congolese forces stationed in Orientale Province. He received the nominal roll of the Katanga detainees which he transmitted to the military authorities of Elisabethville, which in turn informed the families concerned. He is awaiting replies from the latter which he will pass on to the prisoners.

Following on this visit, the ICRC delegate made representations with the Congolese central Government at Léopoldville for the purpose of releasing and repatriating Katanga military prisoners. He has considered the possibility of arranging for an exchange of the latter against Congolese prisoners detained in Katanga.

Shortly afterwards, Mr. Senn again went to Elisabethville where he examined various humanitarian questions with the Katanga authorities. He was present at the closing of the camp which had sheltered several thousands of Baluba refugees. These have been repatriated to Kasai by UNO.

The delegate also visited the prison of Matadi, the port on the lower reaches of the Congo river, in the Léopoldville region, where the detainees included a certain number of Angolan refugees whose condition particularly attracted his attention. He was able to speak freely to them.