

MISSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN THREE ISLANDS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

The ICRC delegate in Sub-Equatorial Africa, Mr. G. Hoffmann, went some time ago to Mauritius, Reunion and Madagascar. He was warmly welcomed by officials and by the leaders of the Red Cross Societies in these three islands. He was able to observe at first hand the humanitarian work accomplished in these regions and the Red Cross spirit which is very much alive in that part of the world, in countries which, by reason of their geographical position, may seem especially prone to isolation. We therefore believe it interesting to summarize, from the information supplied by the ICRC delegate, some of the activities carried out by the Red Cross in these countries.

Mauritius. — This Branch of the British Red Cross has some 2,200 members, of whom about half belong to the Junior Red Cross. It includes five sections and ten detachments of voluntary workers.

The ICRC delegate visited institutions for the handicapped, child welfare centres and depots of material for relief in the event of tornadoes. The latter, by their frequency and violence, make great demands on the resources of the Red Cross and constitute the most serious problem it has to face. Mr. Hoffmann saw the remarkable accomplishments in this field, with rapid mobilization of sections and detachments, setting up of relief depots, co-operation with the police and fire brigades.

The energy with which action of this nature is carried out has given wide publicity to the Red Cross amongst the population and is a testimony to the necessity for its existence. Apart from this so important activity, there are others, such as material assistance to the poor and the sick, regular visits to hospitals and institutes, improvement of hygiene in the "refugee cities" for tornado victims and setting up of sewing centres. Attention is also paid to the train-

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ing of nurses, who render signal service in emergency. A free medical service is available at the five sections; the number of patients cared for varies from 300 to 500 per month at each section.

Reunion. — Like Mauritius, this island is often struck by tornadoes. The activity of the French Red Cross is therefore concentrated on bringing help to victims of this phenomenon; in the field of medicine, its anti-tuberculosis activities occupy an important place and it runs a sanatorium at Le Tampan. Moreover, first-aid courses are training people to be capable of acting in case of accidents.

Madagascar. — The ICRC delegate's visit to the Red Cross of Madagascar was of a particularly important character, for to the interest in making this first direct contact must be added the examination of the formalities to be completed with a view to the recognition of this Society by the ICRC. Mr. Hoffmann's reception, therefore, bore the hallmark of unremitting interest by the authorities, first and foremost of whom was Mr. Tsiranana, President of the Republic. He was also given a very friendly reception by the President of the Central Committee of the Red Cross, Mr. René Rakatobé, as well as by Mrs. Léon Réallon, Vice-President of the same Committee, and in their company he visited various Red Cross institutions.¹

The work undertaken by the French Red Cross before independence is still carried on in Madagascar. A Central Committee has been set up, comprising 22 members, for the purpose of co-ordinating the work of the six provincial committees. The Society's main activities consist of relief action to children and young mothers, to victims of catastrophes (tornadoes, floods), distribution of clothing to poor children and courses in first aid. There are numerous Red Cross dispensaries throughout the country: 681 in the province of Tananarive and 9 in the city of Tananarive. Mothers may bring their children to these dispensaries, particularly for medical examination and malaria prevention. It is worth noting in this respect that the well-organized campaign against malaria has resulted in a considerable decline in infantile mortality.

¹ *Plate.*