

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE IN ALGERIA

Mr. S. Gonard, former Colonel commanding an Army Corps, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross, returned on February 25 from a short mission to Algiers, where, accompanied by Mr. Roger Vust, resident delegate, and Mr. Jacques de Heller, assistant-delegate, he had a series of talks with Mr. Ben Bella, President of the Algerian Government, and with several of his ministers. These talks dealt with the ways in which will be carried out the forthcoming tasks entrusted in Algeria to the ICRC, which will visit persons detained for acts committed in connection with the recent conflict and will attempt to discover the fate of those who have disappeared since the cease-fire.

After these discussions, Mr. Ben Bella and Mr. Gonard signed an agreement by which the Algerian Government undertook to give the ICRC every facility for the accomplishment of its task. The head of the government gave the assurance that the teams of the ICRC would be able to circulate freely on all Algerian territory. This ICRC mission follows recent Franco-Algerian talks as well as representations which the ICRC itself had been making since last autumn. It will start as soon as possible.

As a preliminary measure and with the special authorization of Mr. Ben Bella, Mr. Gonard was able to visit the Maison-Carrée prison near Algiers on February 21. He spoke freely there with large numbers of detainees.

The representatives of the ICRC also met Mr. Mustapha Kermia, President of the Algerian Red Crescent, with whom they reviewed the various problems facing the new National Society in the process of formation and examined methods of helping it in its development.