

Algeria

On January 29 last, the Second General Meeting of the Algerian Red Crescent Society, in Algiers, was attended by a number of dignitaries, including representatives of the Ministries of Health, Social Affairs, National Defence and Foreign Affairs. It was opened by Mr. Mustapha Kermia, the Chairman, who read out the National Society's report for the period from January 1, 1964 to December 31, 1965.

The following extract from that report illustrates the enterprising spirit and constant development of the Algerian Red Crescent.

Sewing workshops.—Almost 80 sewing workshops—or one to each administrative district—have been set up and are operating in a manner as satisfactory as possible, most of them with machines, material and accessories provided by the Swedish Red Cross and partly by the Swiss Red Cross. These workshops, according to reports by those in charge and observations made during visits, are basic in the training of young girls leaving school prematurely. They are highly appreciated by parents and it soon became obvious that they would have to be increased in number.

With an average attendance of some thirty girls per workshop, under the guidance of voluntary tutors, the responsible committees were not long in applying for additional equipment and accessories. In response to our request, the Swedish Red Cross, in 1956, sent us 150 machines and a large quantity of material. For 1966, following further discussions, another consignment of machines and material is planned. In theory, courses are of one year's duration, but in general there is no definite limit ; apart from cutting and sewing, the girls also learn knitting and many of them also follow courses in hygiene and home nursing.

Training of First-Aiders.—One of the basic activities worthy of attention and to which particular care must be given in view of

its wide scope, is the training of first-aiders and first-aid instructors. Our aim is continuously to turn them out so that they may be found even in the most remote regions of the country. Thanks to strict training according to the requisite standards and to periodical refresher courses, their ability to intervene can be made efficient and appreciated, especially in the event of disaster and during health campaigns. Four of our instructors were trained at St. Ours in France by French Red Cross specialists. They have been put in charge of the Red Crescent refresher courses and are available to departmental committees during school holidays. Thirty courses were attended by 546 candidates, 474 of whom successfully passed the examinations. It should be pointed out that first-aid courses are taken not only by young men, as may be thought, but also by adults and young women.

Junior Red Crescent.—Officially inaugurated by the Junior Red Crescent seminar, our junior section is led by adults well versed in the problems to be met. In several departments it has developed well, particularly in Tizi-Ouzou, Mostaganem, Tlemcen, Algiers, Annaba and Constantine. Teams have been formed and, together with the first-aiders, they have engaged in many activities in such fields as health and hygiene campaigns, re-afforestation, beach safety, illiteracy eradication, relief, blood collection, vaccination, etc. Our aim is to establish within each local branch a junior section to study, in co-operation with the Junior Red Cross Bureau of the League and with Juniors of Sister Societies, problems which are of concern to it and also new fields of activity.

Medical actions.—Field work normally co-ordinated by departmental health authorities is frequently undertaken by Algerian Red Crescent doctors, first-aiders and juniors, as part of vaccination and hygiene campaigns and also in the struggle against trachoma and tinea.

Also in this sector can be included the work of our ambulances and utility trucks, which between them handle, inter alia, the conveyance of injured and sick to hospital. Emergency arrangements are organized to cope with various events, such as the Algiers International Fair. We would also mention the circumcision of some

thousand needy children and children of war heroes by Red Crescent doctors in all "Départements".

Kindergartens.—The Society has two kindergartens, one at Tizi-Ouzou and one at Constantine. A small fee is charged as a contribution to expenses. It would be worthwhile to increase their number, particularly in the towns, where the need for them is ever more acute. A study should be undertaken, in conjunction with municipal authorities in order to set up a co-operative scheme for the training of instructresses and to adopt a system of management.

Assistance to the aged.—As auxiliaries to local authorities and, need it be stressed, acting with their agreement, our departmental committees, within the limits of their resources, run homes where the aged may find shelter and the fellowship to which they are entitled. We are pleased to underline the interest aroused by this activity, as shown by the National Defence's recent donation to the Constantine committee of large premises for this purpose.

Soup kitchens.—These were initiated by the departmental committees and having become widespread are now also operated by some local committees. Opened originally during the month of Ramadan, it is not unlikely that they will also operate in winter, especially as the scheme is supported not only by the local authorities but also by many Management Committees, groups, businessmen and volunteer workers.

Distribution of donations received.—After receipt at the central depot, donations in kind from Sister Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent as well as from various international bodies, are sorted before distribution. We could of course mention the names of donors, but we would confine our remarks merely to saying that the active solidarity and generosity of all of them deserves our gratitude. We would, however, make a point of mentioning especially the Swedish Red Cross, the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, and the "War on Want" organization. The quantity of goods distributed, some 1,600 tons, was valued at approximately 10 million Dinars.

Assistance to organized groups.—This is daily becoming more developed, but here too the Algerian Red Crescent can only intervene to the extent its resources allow, to meet the needs of associations of former Moudjahiddines, war widows, children's homes, orphanages, schools, P.M.I. centres, homes for the aged, holiday camps, nursing centres, penitentiaries, etc.

Disaster relief stocks.—There is a standing reserve of goods, comprising tents, blankets, clothing, soap, foodstuffs, etc., which may be used only to meet disaster. Some commodities are replaced as and when fresh stocks are taken into store. Such stocks as tents and blankets and, in general, anything connected with the storing and utilization of disaster relief ought to be the subject of discussion with the Ministry of Social Affairs, which has already been informed, and with the Civil Defence Service. In our opinion the Civil Defence should take over the organization and centralization of relief stocks. We have been led to this conclusion by observations made during the more recent disasters.

Constantine Orthopaedic Centre.—One of the most outstanding of our activities is undoubtedly the Constantine Orthopaedic Centre, the equipment and specialists for which are provided by the Swedish Red Cross and which is operated by the Department Committee. The importance of this Centre is obvious. To date 300 amputees, including many children, have been admitted, fitted with artificial limbs, trained and returned to their families. Some 800 persons on the Algero-Tunisian frontier have registered for admission and are awaiting their turn. Unfortunately this figure is not final; in spite of orders and security measures by local authorities and the removal of mines by the government, fresh victims are continually being reported. Negotiations with the Swedish Red Cross give reason to hope that it will be possible to treat a greater number of casualties in 1966 by setting up at Souk-Ahras a consultation clinic to take impressions of properly performed amputations, so that only cases requiring a second operation need be sent to Constantine.

With a view to relieving the Swedish team at the end of its tour, an agreement has been reached, and approved by the Ministry of

Health, enabling a doctor to go to Stockholm for special training, at the invitation of the Swedish Red Cross. Concomitantly, five young Algerians are being trained at Constantine by Swedish specialists. We are pleased to pay a tribute to the members of the Constantine committee for their determination and faith, in spite of the difficulties encountered. We should also mention the members of the Souk-Ahras committee for their dedication, their liaison and co-ordination work.

Palestro hospital.—Following a visit to Algeria in 1964 by a delegation of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR an agreement will soon be signed, with the approval of the Ministry of Health. This agreement provides for the equipping of a 200 bed hospital at Palestro and the delegation of 17 doctors who will work at the hospital for three years. In point of fact seven Soviet doctors are already on the spot. The official opening of the hospital is scheduled for the beginning of May 1966, and its management will, of course, be the responsibility of the Ministry of Health.

School for the Blind.—So far unheralded, credit for establishing this school is due to the Batna department committee which, in view of the problems of blind young people, took the initiative. It was assisted in the task by the authorities and by a willing public. Some twenty pupils take regular courses in Braille, given by a voluntary tutor.