

REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE IN WEST AFRICA

At the inauguration of the Regional Training Institute in West Africa, which held its seminar in Dakar from 1 to 22 September 1971, following the Dar es Salaam and Accra seminars¹, Mr. A. Schmid, Director of Regional Services of the League of Red Cross Societies, said that the Institutes were the instruments which the League made available to National Societies so that they might meet the urgent need to train senior staff, a prerequisite for the movement's future. Before this address, Dr. Ibrahim Wone, the representative of the Senegalese Minister of Public Health and Social Affairs, hailed the achievements of the Red Cross in his country and summed up the problems of developing countries. He said that in Senegal the originality of the Red Cross lay not so much in its increased tasks or even in the extreme variety and baffling complexity of those tasks, as in the way the Red Cross envisaged its missions and in its dynamic and forward-looking approach to problems.

Mr. Rito Alcantara, President of the Senegalese Red Cross Society, then spoke about the increasingly important role which the Red Cross would be called upon to play in countries of the Third World, where States obviously required a well organized and efficiently run Red Cross, while the Red Cross would need to act as an auxiliary to the public authorities and to do pioneering work. Such assistance was daily becoming larger and more widespread. It had become the true basis for what might be called "Red Cross dynamics", which should be part of the national community's development effort. It should contribute to the advancement of developing countries in the field of health and social action.

¹ See *International Review*, July 1971.

Lastly, Dr. D. Gueye, Director of the Institute, said that the activities of Red Cross institutions were affected by socio-economic factors and stressed the need for a reconversion of tasks according to national and international development. Nor should one forget, he said, that movements such as our own depended a great deal on the members themselves and on those responsible for supervising and aiding them in their humanitarian task.

The seminar was attended by twenty-four delegates from eight National Societies in French-speaking West African countries, namely Cameroon, Dahomey, the Ivory Coast, Mali, the Niger, Senegal, Togo and the Upper Volta. A League delegate in Togo and a member of the French Red Cross were also present. The League was represented by Mr. A. Schmid and by a number of officials from Geneva. The ICRC was represented by Mr. F. Payot, Delegate, who had occasion to speak about the ICRC's current activities, as well as the tasks which the Geneva Conventions laid upon National Societies in wartime, and the particularly important question of the Red Cross in time of peace.

The fact that the Senegalese teachers and the members of the team from Geneva—composed of League and ICRC representatives—have actively and steadily participated in the life of the Institute, should be mentioned as an important factor contributing to the success of the session.

Three objectives were regarded as vital to the Institute's proceedings:

- At individual level, participants should be aware of their identity as African leaders who were to carry out Red Cross activities in their own country.
- At group level, there should be an awareness of the fact that Red Cross action in Africa must be part of the nation's development, and that, while each Society maintained its independence, it should become a social development group determined to pursue constructive activities within the national community.
- At every level, technical knowledge should be acquired in order to ensure the smooth running of the National Red Cross Society and the development of its programmes.

Under the programme, it was possible to deal successively with the introduction to group dynamics, Red Cross socio-medical activities, youth and the Red Cross, information, fund raising and the recruiting of members, relief training and the organization of relief in cases of disaster, the impact of socio-cultural factors on African Red Cross Societies, administration, organization, management and planning, as well as the structure and functioning of the Red Cross at national and international level, the Principles and the Geneva Conventions, and the specific activity of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

By means of active and dynamic methods of group training as well as practical work after briefings, the Training Institute sponsored by the League was successful in promoting Red Cross training and a better awareness of the background against which the humanitarian work was to develop.¹ We might add that the ICRC greatly appreciated the opportunity which the League afforded it of associating in the work of Regional Institutes.

LATIN AMERICAN RED CROSS REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTE

The organization of regional training institutes is undertaken by the League of Red Cross Societies to meet the needs of National Societies for training their officials. We mentioned at the time those that had been organized in Africa and Asia, while in this issue we print an account of the work accomplished at the Institute that was recently arranged at Dakar.

There had not yet been, however, any similar meetings on the American continent, and therefore the first Latin American Regional Training Institute, held from 9 to 30 September 1971, constituted an event of particular importance. It was declared open on behalf of the President of the Republic by his distinguished wife, Mrs. Maria Ester Zuno de Echeverria,¹ after which addresses

¹ *Plate.*