

Turkey

On the occasion of its centenary the Turkish Red Crescent organized a series of events during the week from 9th to 16th June 1967.

Almost thirty National Societies had responded to its invitation and sent representatives. The ICRC delegated Mr. Claude Pilloud, Director.

The celebration began in Ankara with visits to various Turkish Red Crescent establishments. The official ceremony took place on 11th June in the concert hall of the Presidential Orchestra of the Republic.

This event was honoured by the presence of the President of the Republic, H.E. Mr. Cevdet Sunay, the Prime Minister, H.E. Mr. Süleyman Demirel and H.E. Mr. Ismet İnönü, former President of the Council.

The President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, and the President of the Turkish Red Crescent, Mr. Rıza Çerçel, delivered speeches. Particularly topical was a remark contained in the speech by the President of the Republic:

The need for international solidarity in all fields is urgent due to the population explosion, the inadequacy of food supplies, international demographic movements due to many causes, pressing needs which make themselves felt, international relations which develop rapidly and the forbidding prospects of the nuclear age in which we live.

We also quote from the Prime Minister's speech a passage in which he refers to the future of the Turkish Red Crescent. These remarks which can be applied to the whole Red Cross movement were preceded by a tribute to the effective activities of the National Society and of the Junior Red Crescent:

The Turkish Red Crescent Society is the oldest, the most experienced and the most important voluntary organization.

In spite of all the responsibilities assumed by the State today it would be wrong to under-estimate the importance of voluntary organizations which enable citizens to play their part in social work. This the government considers it is essential to encourage as much as possible and we believe that the mission of the Red Crescent and other voluntary organizations enables the best results to be obtained. As in many other countries, the Red Crescent, working to make up for deficiencies in certain social sectors where the State does not intervene, gains a wealth of experience and provides workers with special training. It will thus be easier for the State to assume such activities later when circumstances make this necessary.

Mr. Pilloud read out a message from the ICRC:

The International Committee of the Red Cross extends its warmest wishes and friendly greeting of support and sympathy to the Turkish Red Crescent on this happy occasion when it celebrates its hundredth anniversary.

The ancestor of all National Red Crescent Societies, of which there are today some fifteen in the world, the Ottoman Red Crescent, which became the Turkish Red Crescent in 1923, was founded on June 11, 1868, and recognized by the International Committee of the Red Cross on August 8 of that year, hardly 5 years after the Committee's own foundation.

Your great Society is one of the oldest in the movement and was the first outside the Western world which opened the way to the work of the Red Cross in other continents with other cultures.

With its 650 local agencies and its 150,000 active members, your Society has earned the confidence, affection and approval of the people and has become the ideal charitable institution in the country.

Its relief work has spread and its renown is constantly increasing well beyond the Turkish frontiers and even those of Continental Europe.

The great family of the Red Crescent, the Red Cross and the Red Lion and Sun looks forward already to meeting next autumn in Istanbul for the International Conference of the Red Cross.

May that great meeting, on the threshold of the Turkish Red Crescent's second centenary be a new start to a constantly progressing radiance and activity; that is the dearest wish of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva.

The Countess of Limerick, Chairman of the Standing Commission of the International Red Cross, who was present as the repre-

representative for the League of Red Cross Societies, also gave an address. Several National Society representatives conveyed congratulations to the Turkish Red Crescent on the occasion of its centenary.

After laying a wreath at the Ataturk Mausoleum the Turkish Red Crescent leaders and foreign delegates flew to Istanbul where an exhibition had been opened, commemorating the National Society's hundredth anniversary.

This exhibition at the indoor Sports Stadium had several sections. It broadly illustrated the activities of the Turkish Red Crescent. There were many posters and a Red Cross philately exhibit and special mention should be made of one section containing several hundred model scenes with dolls from Turkey and many other countries. The exhibition was a pronounced success from the outset.

To celebrate the centenary the Turkish postal authorities issued a series of three stamps with likenesses of the founders of the Turkish Red Crescent and a picture showing Ataturk, who was a supporter of the Red Crescent, visiting the National Society.

Various social events took place in Istanbul, and visits to Turkish Red Cross institutions. One visit was to the Selimiye Caserne where Florence Nightingale lavished care on the wounded of the Crimean War.

The Turkish Red Crescent officially celebrated the Centenary of its foundation in a number of ways, it was the occasion for it to show its guests the increasing importance of the National Society and how it is today closely associated with the life of the country.