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and the Red Cross Movement, 1940 –1943**

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From Dissident to Recognised Belligerent? The Free French and the Red Cross Movement, 1940 –1943

Abstract:

This article explores how the Free French, who were obsessed with establishing legitimacy and obtaining resources on the international scene, sought to create links with the Red Cross Movement. First, it highlights the significance attached to affiliation with the Red Cross by a political committee-in-exile operating outside the traditional diplomatic framework. Although de Gaulle was relatively successful in this quest and obtained a partial diplomatic recognition within the Red Cross apparatus in 1943, this only extended to the transmission of information about PoWs. Second, it expands and deepens the history of the Red Cross movement by illustrating the complexity of Red Cross philanthropy and the plurality of its transnational networks on the ground. In the Free French ‘archipelago’, local Red Cross structures — often led by women— were complicated by their own unique dynamics, entangled both in the geopolitics of the time and the local politics of their respective spaces.

In October 1940, three months after the French defeat, a small group of French Resistance members considered forming a Free French Red Cross in London to provide aid to the wounded Gaullist combatants and Prisoners of War dispersed across the world. However, the French Red Cross (CRF) was still active in Vichy France and in the majority of the French Empire, which remained faithful to **Marshal** Pétain. According to the International Red Cross guidelines, individual countries were only permitted one national society. The Free French were aware of this stipulation, yet devised strategies to establish links with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the broader Red Cross Movement. Despite their inventiveness, Free French relationships with the Red Cross movement were fraught with problems, in part due to their outsider position in the traditional diplomatic framework. In his memoir *Les Hommes Partis de Rien*, the talented French jurist René Cassin hinted strongly at a sense of failure, noting that the Red Cross was the only domain in the international area where the Free French had to make significant concessions.¹ Cassin’s memoir is illuminating with regard to the importance that the Free French ascribed to having its own Red Cross and restoring Free France’s status within both the Red

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2 Cross apparatus and **the rules of the Geneva Conventions**. It also raises several questions concerning our
3 understanding of Free French foreign **policy**, as well as the relationships between the Red Cross
4 movement and resistance organisations.² How did the Free French— who were obsessed by search of
5 legitimacy on the international scene— understand the Red Cross Movement (including the ICRC,
6 national Red Cross Societies, and League of National Red Cross societies)? And how did they deal with
7 the CRF in Vichy France? How, in return, did the Red Cross Movement (particularly the ICRC, who
8 were perceived as stringently legalistic) view the dissident ‘Free French’ Movement? Furthermore, how
9 did the Free French mobilize Red Cross networks to improve the conditions of its POWs and troops?
10 Finally, how far did these diplomatic tensions between Gaullists and Red Cross officials’ impact on
11 humanitarian work on the ground? And who were the main actors of the development of Free French/Red
12 Cross philanthropy at the macro-diplomatic, meso-bureaucratic and ground levels?
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22 While **devoting attention to the CRF’s history in occupied metropolitan France, most** historians have so
23 far paid little attention to how the Free French understood and interacted with the Red Cross Movement
24 in the handful of colonies that followed de Gaulle (Nouvelles-Hébrides, Afrique Équatoriale Française,
25 **Cameroun**, Établissements Français des Indes, Établissements Français d’Océanie, Nouvelle
26 Calédonie).³ This article seeks to address this gap by focussing on how Free French diplomats, jurists,
27 medical doctors, philanthropists and missionaries dispersed across various territories corresponded,
28 interacted, and (re)built their relationships with representatives of the Red Cross world. We take here a
29 broad definition of the Free French movement created by de Gaulle in London on 18 June 1940 and
30 officially dissolved on 31 July 1943.⁴ We consider both those who left France to keep fighting against
31 the Germans beyond General de Gaulle, and those who were already abroad and joined relief committees
32 set up across the world. In 1940, the **Free French** organisation was an ‘archipelago’, composed of a
33 handful of colonies without metropolis, highly dependent on their Allies and **often marred by internal**
34 **tensions**.⁵ From London to Brazzaville, De Gaulle’s representatives were driven by three main aims:
35 creating a military force, obtaining official recognition internationally, and increasing the movement’s
36 territorial base.⁶ As Jean Louis Cremieux Brillhac observes, the Free French embarked on a continuous
37 process of ‘auto-creation’ to regain national sovereignty step by step.⁷ Amongst them, René Cassin
38 searched to reinstate Free France through participation of inter-Allied conferences and international
39 organizations.⁸ This had significant implications for Free French relationships with the Red Cross
40 Movement, which included the ICRC, the national Red Cross Societies (particularly the British Red
41 Cross) and the League of Red Cross Societies.
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4 Amongst the representatives of the governments in exile (Belgium, the Netherlands, Czechoslovakia,
5 Norway and Poland), de Gaulle faced specific challenges, resulting from having to oppose both German
6 occupiers and a political regime (the Vichy regime) that presented itself as a 'legal' and sovereign body.
7 As a result, in 1940, the legal status of his troops was precarious. The armistice's agreement signed
8 between the Germans and the French Government in June 1940 stipulated clearly that all French nationals
9 who continued to fight against Germany would be considered *Franc-tireurs*, while the armistice
10 agreement signed with the Italians was less precise.⁹ In addition, De Gaulle's political committee, the
11 *Conseil de l'Empire* (created on 27 October), was not fully recognised by the Allies as a 'government-
12 in-exile' with full legal and constitutional rights.¹⁰ In this context, not only were the Free French unable
13 to form an officially recognised 'Red Cross' in the rallied territories, but they also depended on Whitehall
14 and the British Red Cross to protect and bring relief to their prisoners in enemy hands.¹¹ The difficult
15 cooperation between them exposed the difficulties of the integration of Free French units into a multi-
16 national British-led coalition.¹² According to the 'Churchill-de Gaulle' accords of 7 August 1940, de
17 Gaulle's troops formed an Allied French Army (with its own personnel, uniforms, discipline, language
18 scale of pay) that could be placed under the direct command of British officers.¹³ In spite of the signature
19 of this Franco-British agreement, the legal status of Free French PoWs remained uncertain. Throughout
20 the period, the Axis powers considered them at times as *Franc-tireurs* and irregular fighters and at times
21 as regular troops and members of the British Army.
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36 In linking the history of the Free French with the history of the Red Cross, this article makes three
37 important contributions. Firstly, this study of the Free French and Red Cross movements offers a vital
38 perspective on the history of Free French wartime diplomacy by considering the significance of the
39 affiliation to the Red Cross for a committee-in-exile operating outside the traditional diplomatic
40 framework. It highlights the diplomatic creativity of the Free French, who tried to use their contacts in
41 the ICRC and interpretations of the Geneva conventions to strengthen their position worldwide. It also
42 reveals the multiplicity of actors involved in the elaboration of structures for medical care and relief to
43 both the wounded and prisoners of war.¹⁴ Crucially, it argues that the elaboration of Red Cross structures
44 in 1940-1943 was multi-directional and multi-sited. For example, in the rallied territories of the French
45 Empire, Free French authorities relied on religious actors and their pre-war networks who pursued their
46 own 'missionary interests', as well as on a handful of women who were integrated in Red Cross networks
47 in the inter-war years and saw Red Cross activities as instruments of *soft power*.¹⁵
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4 Secondly, examining Red Cross networks prompts us to reconsider the links between Vichy and the Free
5 French, the CRF and the Free French. In Vichy France, the three Red Cross associations (*Société de*
6 *secours aux blessés militaires*, *Association des dames françaises*, and *Union des femmes de France*) were
7 merged into a single organisation in August 1940.¹⁶ Presided over by Marshal Pétain (and largely under
8 German influence) the CRF remained recognised by the ICRC and was integrated into Vichy's war effort.
9 Although its official archives have partly disappeared, Jean-Pierre Le Crom has traced how the CRF was
10 subordinated to the 'Secours national' which was used as a tool for the mobilisation of minds and the
11 promotion of the 'National Revolution'—notably through its activities for PoWs' families.¹⁷ Despite the
12 close control of German occupiers, some Red Cross personnel joined the Resistance in metropolitan
13 France, enduring torture and deportation for their actions on behalf of the Allied cause.¹⁸ In short, the
14 nature of Red Cross activism in metropolitan France was complex and ambivalent and often blurred the
15 neat political distinction between 'Resistance' and 'Collaboration' made in the post-war period.¹⁹

26 Thirdly, this article seeks to enrich the history of the Red Cross and humanitarianism during the Second
27 World War.²⁰ Our study draws on the scholarship on the ICRC and the Holocaust, which has interrogated
28 the close relationships between the organisation and the Swiss government, but considers the ICRC in
29 its own term. While there were undoubtedly close links between the ICRC and Swiss government, the
30 humanitarian organization was neither a monolithic entity nor simply the right hand of the Swiss
31 government.²¹ The historiography has thus far paid less attention to the legal testing posed by the Free
32 French and—more broadly—European resistance movements to the Swiss institution. It has neglected
33 how these resistance movements attempted to establish diplomatic links with the ICRC and mobilise Red
34 Cross networks. Analysing how humanitarian activities were thought about and developed within the
35 Free French archipelago invites us to consider the plurality of actors that made up the Red Cross network
36 as well as the diversity of spaces in which they acted. The loose structure of the movement, we argue,
37 offered the possibility of hosting a variety of humanitarian activities under its umbrella, even when they
38 were not fully recognised as such.

52 To do so, this article draws on state and private archival sources collected in France (Archives
53 Diplomatiques, Archives Nationales, Service Historique de la Défense), Brazzaville (*Archives coloniale*
54 *de l'Afrique Équatoriale Française in the Archives nationales de la République du Congo*), Geneva

(ICRC, League), London (Foreign Office). Section I discusses why the Free French wanted to create a Free French Red Cross in 1940-1941 and explores why they failed to have it recognised by the ICRC. Section II examines the ambivalent responses of the ICRC on the multiple questions raised by the existence of the 'dissident' Gaullist movement, including the issue of the treatment of prisoners of war and civilian internees. It unearths how the Free French managed to regain sovereignty on PoW matter and obtained to be treated as a belligerent under the Geneva Convention for the prisoners of war of 1929. Section III moves to the level of the field and considers the complexity of Free French philanthropy and Red Cross activities. If at the diplomatic level, the Free French insisted on full diplomatic recognition within the Red Cross apparatus, on the ground, they were highly dependent of both Allied national Red Cross societies and local donors in their rallied colonies for provision and procurement.

I.

By 1940, National Red Cross societies had proven that they could play a crucial role in the provision of medical care in conflicts. Since the late nineteenth century, they had offered a crucial support to their respective armies' medical services and brought relief to prisoners of war. By the end of the First World War, some societies had also become tools of statecraft and 'instruments' of foreign policy.²² In France, for instance, Romain Fathi has documented how the heterogeneous grouping of associations that constituted the French Red Cross aligned their international activities to the policies of the *Quai d'Orsay*, by pursuing anti-German actions and nurturing France's soft power in the early 1920s.²³ It is thus not surprising that the Free French envisaged creating their own Red Cross body as they tried to reconstitute a military force and contest Vichy legitimacy on the international scene. As Emmanuel Cartier observes, from its beginning, Free French jurists presented Free France as the legal body representing France.²⁴ They denied the legitimacy of the Vichy regime by arguing that its authority rested on a legal *coup d'état* and strove to place Free France under the rule of law.²⁵ But, if legal legitimacy was a crucial element of their doctrine, the Free French were aware of their precarious position outside of the diplomatic framework. In 1940 and early 1941, there were thus a few questions that needed answers: was it important to create a relief body? Should the Free French use the name 'Red Cross'? Should that body primarily be a military or diplomatic auxiliary, or both? And, finally, should its central committee be based in London (headquarters of the Free French) or in Brazzaville (capital of the Free French after 27 October 1940)?

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2 In Great Britain, the summer of 1940 saw the development of several initiatives aimed at collecting and
3 coordinating the provision of welfare for 2,500 wounded French soldiers.²⁶ Relief initiatives developed
4 rapidly to provide material help to the Free French forces. These various relief efforts built on existing
5 Francophile networks in Great Britain and North America, which believed that France should stay in the
6 war and fight against Germany. In September, the *Association des Amis des Volontaires Français* was
7 created to coordinate ‘all offers of help’ and to centralise all gifts to de Gaulle emanating from Great
8 Britain and abroad for the welfare of his volunteers.²⁷ Collectively these relief efforts—which were not
9 only emerging in London but also elsewhere in the world—raised and distributed important quantities of
10 money, material, and medical supplies.²⁸ This was particularly important for the Free French who lacked
11 material and personnel.²⁹ De Gaulle’s first months in London were plagued by disappointments as
12 important French political and military figures failed to join him. Administratively, its London offices
13 had only 125 French people working in them.³⁰ Financially, De Gaulle’s organisation was entirely
14 dependent on the British Treasury, and it survived until 19 March 1941 thanks largely to improvised
15 financial arrangements.³¹ Militarily, his army was very small.³² **In total, by 1943, the Free French only
16 recruited 73.300 combatants, including an approximate 30.000 colonial troops and 3800 foreigners.³³**

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30 As the Gaullists developed their political organisation in the autumn of 1940, they began discussing the
31 creation of a ‘Free French’ Red Cross. In response to the meeting of Petain and Hitler at Montoire, de
32 Gaulle created the *Conseil de Défense de l’Empire* on 27 October 1940. According to Julian Jackson,
33 this was a key moment for de Gaulle, as his arrival in Douala marked his realisation that the public had
34 come to perceive him as a political figure around which they could project their ideals.³⁴ Concurrently,
35 on 24 October the Free French in London discussed the possibility of creating a body called ‘Free French
36 Red Cross’.³⁵ This decision was all the more important due to there being no active Red Cross
37 organisations in Brazzaville—now the capital of the Free French.³⁶ Indeed, for Bernard Mélamède, the
38 creation of a Free French Red Cross was necessary for several reasons. **For this close collaborator of
39 René Cassin in London,** a Red Cross would provide assistance to Free French troops, carry out fund-
40 raising activities in the ‘rallied’ territories and liaise with other national Red Cross societies, especially
41 the American Red Cross.³⁷ Without a Free French Red Cross, medical materials from the American Red
42 Cross had to be received via the British Red Cross.³⁸ A Free French Red Cross could also coordinate the
43 work of local Red Crosses committees in those Free French rallied territories that had lost their relations
44 with their parent organisation in Paris.³⁹ Mélamède evoked the example of the Czechoslovakian
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2 government in exile, which recognised the ‘exceptional services that only a Red Cross could give to their
3 cause’ and recreated a national Red Cross society in exile.⁴⁰
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7 Discussions about the creation of a Free French Red Cross were not confined to the London office of the
8 Gaullist organisation. In Free French colonial territories, resources were scarce and a Free French Red
9 Cross was essential for the collection of private donations and gifts from local committees.⁴¹ **These**
10 **committees were usually set up by white elites to support the French war efforts instead of local**
11 **populations.**⁴² In Yaoundé, for instance, the medical officer Vaucel called for the creation of a Free
12 French Red Cross to get the funds collected by the newly created local Red Cross committee in
13 Cameroon.⁴³ In the absence of a Free French Red Cross, there was a risk that this money would be either
14 sent to the **French Red Cross (in Vichy)** or left unused. From their perspective, it was not always clear
15 where to send donations – i.e Vichy or Free French – and which routes and transport links to send them
16 by. In the autumn of 1940, the local committee of the Red Cross in Pondichery decided to keep the knitted
17 gifts for wounded men and PoWs made by local women as there were unsure where to send them.⁴⁴
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28 For the global French diaspora, a Free French Red Cross would serve as a vehicle of informal
29 internationalism and propaganda, giving Free French local committees and officials a means to mobilize
30 the mind and promote a France that did not recognise itself in Vichy.⁴⁵ Very early on, Free French
31 Committees were created by diasporic civil societies to organise fund-raising activities. Often ran by
32 socially elite women, they contributed to the political legitimization of the Resistance and fought hard in
33 the war of political influence against Vichy.⁴⁶ In February 1941, for instance, the *Free French Relief*
34 *Committee* was created in New York and became an important instrument for the collection of charitable
35 donations and the garnering of American sympathies.⁴⁷ **In Australia, in spite of important opposition**
36 **from pro-vichy French, the *Free French Movement* collected important funds.**⁴⁸ **As Robert Belot**
37 **observes, Free French Committees were also particularly active in Latin America, gathering important**
38 **sum of dollars to provide food and clothes for Free French combatants.**⁴⁹ Fund-raising became an
39 important tool to acquire the much-needed perception of legitimacy **across continents.**⁵⁰ **The first yearly**
40 **report of the London-based *Association of Friends of the French Volunteers* (Amis des Volontaires**
41 **Français) gives a very clear sense of the numerous Free French Committees created across the world.**
42 **The *Association* received donations from the ‘Comité France Libre’ in Shanghai, the ‘Comité de Gaulle’**
43 **in New Caledonia, the ‘Comité Pro Refugiados Franceses’ in Venezuela and the ‘Comité France Libre’**
44 **in Bombay, Singapore and Puerto Rico.**⁵¹ By August 1942, there were 412 such committees, dispersed
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2 **acrossed 42 countries.**⁵² Women's involvement in these relief committees advanced their influence and
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4 visibility in the still near exclusively male sphere of foreign policies.⁵³ Yet—as Mélamède suggests in
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6 his November 1940 note—a centralising 'Free French Red Cross' body was necessary to control the
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8 activities of these various fundraising initiatives.
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11 A Free French Red Cross could not only help de Gaulle's movement publicity and coordinate these
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13 dispersed initiatives, it was also a central body in the discussions regarding the application of the Geneva
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15 convention for Free French prisoners of war.⁵⁴ A key concern of the Free French was that the legal status
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17 of Free French PoWs was not clear. Free French soldiers who joined British troops or acted under British
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19 command were considered British PoWs and were thus protected by the Geneva Convention, but the
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21 Free French who fought in their own name did not benefit from this protection. Following the Anglo-
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23 Free French Dakar fiasco in late September 1940, a dozen preeminent Free French—including
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25 Boislambert—were taken captive and sent to France where they were later condemned to death.⁵⁵ Free
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27 French authorities were highly preoccupied that the Axis powers and the Vichyites considered some Free
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29 French soldiers as *Franc-tireurs* and threatened their families who had remained in France.⁵⁶ This
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31 preoccupation led to a first meeting which took place at St James Palace in November 1940 between
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33 representatives of the British Red Cross and Foreign Office, the Free French Medical officer Ray and the
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35 ICRC delegate in London, **Rodolphe** Haccius, who all wanted to ensure that any members of de Gaulle's
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37 forces who fell into enemy hands would be regarded as a lawful belligerent and not as a *Franc-tireur*.

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39 During this British-Free French and ICRC meeting, participants also discussed the formation of a
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41 committee that could carry out Red Cross work for the Free French forces.⁵⁷ The Free French elaborated
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43 a provisional version of the status of the 'Société de Secours aux Blessés des FFL' and its subsidiary
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45 association the 'British Help for the French Wounded'.⁵⁸ This body would have the functions of a
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47 national Red Cross society (including the formation of medical personnel, collect of funds, organisation
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49 of medical care, cooperation with national red cross societies) but neither its name nor its 'officially
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51 recognised place' in the Red Cross movement. Although it was obvious during this meeting that this
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53 society could not be recognised by Geneva as the French Red Cross, the Gaullists did not abandoned
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55 the idea of an officially recognised body. **In the spring of 1941, René Cassin wrote a personal letter to**
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57 **one of the members of the Swiss institution, Suzanne Ferrière, to know her opinion about a possible**
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59 **recognition of a Free French Red Cross by the ICRC.**⁵⁹ They probably knew each other from the interwar
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61 **period, when René Cassin represented the French government at the League of Nations in Geneva.**

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2 **Although her answer left little hope, the Free French were determined to try.** In May 1941, the Free
3 French Director of Foreign and Economic service, René Pleven, sent a telegram to the Haut-Commissaire
4 in Brazzaville asking them to call the embryonic Free French Red Cross the ‘Comité de Secours aux
5 Blessés et Réfugiés Français’ to avoid jurisdictional issues with Geneva.⁶⁰ He also asked for the
6 appointment of two women to preside over it: a nurse called Marie Burnel, and Marcelle Rottenfluc, a
7 doctor. This Committee was officially created in Brazzaville on 22 August 1941, with the Free French
8 inviting the ICRC to formally recognise it shortly after.
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16 The issue of official recognition became a bone of contention between the Free French and the ICRC.
17 The formal conditions for the recognition of a new Red Cross—as well as the competence of the ICRC
18 in this matter—were governed by the Statute of the Red Cross of 1928. The policy of the Geneva
19 organization regarding Red Cross recognition had been erratic at the beginning of the war. For example,
20 the ICRC recognised the Irish Red Cross in November 1939, because their application process had started
21 well before 1939. The ICRC hesitated to recognise the Slovak Red Cross in May 1940, and eventually
22 decided to postpone formal recognition while continuing its working relationship with it.⁶¹ As the
23 question of formal recognition became more contentious, the ICRC sent a circular to all national Red
24 Cross societies clarifying their policy on the matter in September 1941. They explained that the issue of
25 recognition was too sensitive during wartime and that they were not in a position to check that a society
26 met all the necessary requirements typical of the process during peacetime. As a consequence, they
27 decided that they would not formally recognise any new societies during the war. However, this would
28 neither prevent the ICRC from working with them nor from mentioning these societies in the
29 organisation’s journal, the *Bulletin des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge*.⁶²
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42 The Gaullists tried to exploit ICRC hesitations on these complex issues. Free French jurists and legal
43 experts prepared different arguments to convince the Swiss organization that they complied with the
44 required peacetime conditions for a Free French Red Cross. On 23 August 1941, Bernard Mélamède sent
45 a note to René Cassin entitled ‘Free French Red Cross’, in which he highlighted that the ICRC had
46 already shown some leniency in its rule to only recognise one Red Cross organisation per country. Well
47 aware that the main problem would be the existence of a still-functioning French Red Cross, Free French
48 jurists referred to the existence of two Spanish Red Cross groups during the country’s civil war.⁶³
49 Mélamède also insisted that they had recognised the creation of the Dutch, Belgian and Czech Red Cross
50 divisions in exile in London who did not have any organic links with the official Red Cross groups still
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2 in operation in their respective occupied countries.⁶⁴ While these Red Cross groups carried out their
3 activities mainly in Great Britain, a 'Free French' Red Cross undertook humanitarian work in Free French
4 territories under the sole jurisdiction of the *Conseil de Défense de l'Empire*. More importantly, Mélamède
5 refuted the argument that it was impossible to constitute a Free French Red Cross due to the absence of
6 a recognised Free French state, as the British government had already applied the same rules and
7 legislation than they had applied to other governments-in-exile to the Free French. He also affirmed that
8 the Czech Red Cross was recognised a year before the recognition of the Czech government in exile.⁶⁵
9 These attempts signalled both the importance of integrating Free France in the international legal system
10 and the political ambition of the Free French. Indeed, despite being supported by Cassin and Mélamède
11 who (excluding their collaboration with de Gaulle), 'never played a part in politics at the highest level',
12 the Free French were using the Red Cross to regain a foothold on the international scene.⁶⁶
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22 Mélamède and Cassin's case in favour of a 'Free French Red Cross' was complicated by the attitude of
23 the French Red Cross (CRF) in Vichy France. Vichy France also used its supervision of the French Red
24 Cross and diplomatic relations with the ICRC as a tool for broader political aims, with the latter trying
25 to use Red Cross principles and networks to establish links with local committees in Free France's rallied
26 territories.⁶⁷ In September 1941, the CRF sent a circular to all the committees of the Empire (including
27 Free French control territories) aimed at restoring the 'Red Cross connection' (*les liens Croix-Rouge*)
28 across the French Empire. Aware that this suggestion would be welcomed by the ICRC, the CRF asked
29 the Swiss organisation to support this gathering attempt.⁶⁸ After this proposal from the CRF, it became
30 even more difficult for the ICRC to officially recognise a Gaullist Red Cross in Brazzaville or London.
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40 With regards to French Equatorial Africa, the CRF proposed the appointment of the Apostolic Delegate
41 of Brazzaville Paul Biéchy as head of the French Red Cross general delegation.⁶⁹ Biéchy was a member
42 of the conservative congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers. He had welcomed both the Gaullists in
43 Brazzaville in 1940, and played a crucial role as an intermediary during the imprisonment of pro-Vichy
44 Monseigneur Louis Tardy, bishop of Libreville, who preached that the Free French were not French in
45 their hearts.⁷⁰ To use an expression used by the ICRC, the delegate of the Red Cross in Brazzaville
46 (Biéchy) perfectly 'embodied the two Frances'.⁷¹ In such a context, the ICRC was even less likely to
47 deviate from its principle of no recognition during the war and despite important efforts, by October 1941
48 it became clear that the Free French had failed in their efforts to gain official recognition of a 'Free
49 French Red Cross'. The ICRC jurist Jean Pictet answered to the High Commissioner in **Free French**
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2 Africa (the administrative entity including French Equatorial Africa and Cameroun), Adolphe Sicé, that
3 the ICRC could not formally recognise the Brazzaville Committee, despite being nonetheless ready to
4 establish working relationships with it.⁷²
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12 Contrary to the Free French, the ICRC sought to isolate the question of PoW's protection from that of
13 recognizing a Free French Red Cross society. As far as PoWs were concerned, the ICRC aimed at
14 becoming a useful intermediary between belligerents but without formally recognising the 'dissident'
15 Free French. The ICRC and its Central Agency for Prisoners of War had been granted a general
16 competence to monitor the application of the Geneva Convention of 1929 (Article 88) relating to PoWs.
17 Yet, many governments preferred to entrust the protection of their captive nationals to a Protecting Power
18 (a neutral state designed to represent the interests of the belligerent on the territory of the enemy) as
19 provided by the Geneva Convention under Article 86 and as was the case for British PoWs in the wake
20 of the fall of France in 1940.⁷³ In the Free French case, the Protecting Power mechanism could not apply
21 as the Free French Committee was not a recognised government. No neutral state would have accepted
22 to neither represent their interests in the territory of another belligerent, nor to represent the interests of
23 another belligerent in a Free French controlled territory.⁷⁴ For the ICRC delegate Marcel Junod, the ICRC
24 had a crucial role to play in this context as it was the only institution that could be solicited by individuals
25 or Red Cross societies to obtain news about Gaullist missing soldiers or internees and request their
26 protection.⁷⁵ For example, when the Swiss government could not act as Protecting Power for 'juridical
27 reasons' in the Far East, the ICRC was asked to take care of the interests of French dissidents on a
28 'humanitarian basis'.⁷⁶ Regarding the situation of the Free French soldiers, the beginning of 1941 saw
29 informal contacts started between General Catroux and the ICRC delegate in Le Caire, M. Vaucher. The
30 ICRC wanted to know if the Free French would be ready to exchange lists of prisoners of war and
31 internees on a reciprocal basis, as the ICRC had started to receive news about a few captured and
32 wounded Free French soldiers (notably from Italian authorities).⁷⁷
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50 The uncertain situation of the Free French in terms of international recognition provided a unique
51 opportunity for the ICRC to foster its role as a neutral intermediary for protecting the interests of PoWs
52 and internees.⁷⁸ But in practice, this posed two problems: the first was that communicating news to Free
53 French soldiers' families in France (in both the occupied and free zone) could be dangerous for them due
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2 to the repression that the German and Vichy regime operated against them. This led to talks between the
3 ICRC and the French Red Cross to ensure that families of Free French soldiers would not be targeted nor
4 endangered for having received news from the ICRC.⁷⁹ Although they had little information about the
5 details of the agreement between German occupiers and Red Cross officials, they knew that the French
6 Red Cross was under the influence of German occupiers. For example, in September 1941, Eliane Brault,
7 who had recently escaped France, signed a report noting that German occupiers closely control the
8 recruitment and employment of French Red Cross Personnel.⁸⁰ Brault was well placed to understand the
9 nature of German control, as she had created a social committee for families of PoWs after the French
10 Armistice and participated in an underground resistance network, before being arrested in Marseille in
11 January 1941.⁸¹ Both the ICRC and the Free French wondered to what extent the French Red Cross in
12 Vichy France was able to accomplish its task of a humanitarian organisation.
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22 The second problem concerned the way the ICRC should communicate with Free French authorities.
23 Willing to keep good relations with all the powerful belligerents of the time, the Swiss institution did not
24 want to be accused by the Axis governments of legitimizing a dissident movement by communicating
25 directly with it. To solve this problem, an arrangement between the ICRC, the British Red Cross and the
26 Free French was made on 27 March 1941. At a meeting in London, they established that the Foreign
27 Relations Department of the British Red Cross would be the only intermediary between the Free French
28 and the ICRC regarding the POWs. Through the deputy director, **Jeannetta S. Warner**, they would arrange
29 the transmission of news between Free French and their families using a 'Postal Message Scheme' form
30 as well as the exchange of PoW lists.⁸² They also tried to mediate on the situation of the Free French and
31 Vichyite prisoners in other French territories and find a solution to transfer money from the Free French
32 to their family in France.⁸³ Although these pragmatic arrangements did not entirely meet Free French
33 political ambitions, they did constitute a first and important step for the welfare of Free French PoWs, as
34 it meant they could be treated on the same basis as their British counterparts.
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46 For the ICRC, establishing contacts with the Gaullist movement was also essential to respond to the
47 demands emanating from the Axis powers and the Vichyite authorities who worried about the fate of
48 their nationals held in Free French-controlled territories⁸⁴. **In the end 1940**, the Germans contacted the
49 ICRC to inquire about the treatment of German civil internees in **Free French Africa** and reiterated their
50 demand for internees in Tahiti in May 1941⁸⁵. As for the Vichyite government, they were anxious about
51 the fate of the French internees that had been made captive during the brief Gabon campaign in November
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2 1940. During this operation, the Vichyite boats (Bougainville and Poncelet) were taken over by the Free
3 French and the Royal Navy. Vichyite sailors from the Poncelet were taken by the British and transported
4 to Nigeria, and Bougainville's sailors were held captive in Gabon by the Free French. According to the
5 Vichy authorities, they would have been better treated if they had been captured by the British than the
6 Gaullists. As Martin Thomas demonstrates, between October 1940 and July 1941, British policy toward
7 Vichyite POW was far more conciliatory than that of the Free French.⁸⁶ Considering them as prisoners
8 of war under the Geneva Convention, the British allowed them to correspond with their families. British
9 policies were not solely driven by humanitarian considerations and instead sought to exchange and
10 repatriate them as soon as possible to guarantee a favourable treatment for their own prisoners detained
11 by the Vichyites.⁸⁷

21 To alleviate Vichy concerns the ICRC contacted **Jeannetta S. Warner** of the British Red Cross Society in
22 April 1941 to obtain information about French internees (military and civilian) held by the Free French.
23 In response, Free French authorities claimed that Vichyite internees were not prisoners of war but 'lost'
24 fellow comrades. For them, Vichy internees were Frenchmen only 'temporarily separated' by 'a different
25 conception of their duty towards France' not enemies.⁸⁸ De Gaulle argued that they benefited from a
26 more favourable treatment than the one prescribed by the Geneva Convention and refused to grant
27 permission to the ICRC to visit Free French camps, in retaliation for the lack of reciprocity from Vichy.
28 As long as Vichy authorities refused ICRC visits for Gaullists in their hands, de Gaulle would also object
29 to co-operate with the ICRC over that matter.⁸⁹ As Jean-Marc Dreyfus suggests, de Gaulle's official
30 insistence on reciprocity was a key aspect of Free French policy towards the ICRC.⁹⁰

40 In spite of the legalism of some of the members of the ICRC, the reasons outlined above finally prompted
41 its president Max Huber, to write directly to De Gaulle in August 1941.⁹¹ This letter was the beginning
42 of an episodic correspondence between the two men which lasted until August 1942 when De Gaulle
43 stopped replying to Huber. In his first letter, Huber formalized the system of the exchange of reciprocal
44 information about the PoWs via the intermediary of the British authorities and the British Red Cross as
45 according to the Geneva convention. He confirmed the presence of an ICRC delegate, M. Burnier, in
46 Syria and announced the dispatch of another delegate, Fritz Arnold, in Brazzaville. His mission was to
47 visit Free French camps in which foreign enemies (particularly Italian PoWs and German internees) were
48 detained, and was also charged with convincing Free French authorities to authorise visits for French
49 internees. For the Free French—and de Gaulle in particular—this direct communication between Huber

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2 and him was not enough, and by the end of 1941 he was actively seeking recognition in support of their
3 struggle against the 'unlawful' Vichy government. To this end, he used the POW protection mechanisms,
4 provided by the Geneva Convention and based on the principle of reciprocal list exchange (especially
5 articles 77 and 79).
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10 The PoW protection mechanism was indeed a powerful lever to be recognised as any other belligerent
11 power. On 19 November 1941, in his answer to Max Huber's first letter, de Gaulle questioned the
12 established procedure for the exchange of PoW lists. He proposed to stop communication through the
13 intermediary of the British Red Cross, instead setting up a direct exchange system with the ICRC. This
14 letter was followed by the creation of a *Service des Prisonniers de Guerre du Comité National Français*
15 (Service for Prisoners of War of the French National Committee) led by Mélamède who sent the first list
16 of Italian prisoners directly to the ICRC.⁹² This was not an interim Red Cross, but an Information bureau
17 created on the basis of the Article 77 of the 1929 Geneva convention that stipulated that 'each of the
18 belligerent Powers and the neutral Powers who have belligerents in their care, shall institute an official
19 bureau to give information about the prisoners of war in their territory'.⁹³ Although Max Huber reasserted
20 the ICRC's choice to continue to go through the British, de Gaulle argued that the lists received through
21 the British were incomplete.⁹⁴ Further, he insisted that reciprocal exchange was a matter of principle as
22 the article 79 of the Convention of 1929 stipulated that the Central Agency 'shall transmit the information
23 as rapidly as possible to the prisoners' own country or the Power in whose service they have been'.⁹⁵ For
24 de Gaulle, it was crucial to stop corresponding via the British to make clear that the Free French formed
25 an army serving France (and not the British). This assertion confirmed de Gaulle's intent to be recognised
26 as the sole representative of France.
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41 The events of the summer 1942 confirmed this evolution of intent. In June, the French demonstrated their
42 determination and military value during the battle of Bir Hakeim which was a great 'public opinion
43 victory' for the group.⁹⁶ On 14 July 1942, Free France officially became *Fighting France* (La France
44 combattante), with the integration of clandestine resistance movements within metropolitan France. As
45 Cremieux-Brilhac notes, this was a turning point in the history of de Gaulle's movement, for two main
46 reasons: first, it marked a clear shift (initiated in the autumn of 1940) from a *military* to a *political*
47 Gaullism—the key aim being not only to win the war but to be in power in post-war France. Second, it
48 meant that the British recognised the Fighting French as the French behind the United Nations, and de
49 Gaulle as *leader* of the French Resistance.⁹⁷ In this context, it is not surprising that de Gaulle took a more
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2 direct approach to the ICRC. He tried (once again) to establish a *fait accompli* by sending the lists of the
3 Italian prisoners that the Free French had made during the battle of Bir Hakeim directly to the ICRC.⁹⁸
4 De Gaulle also stopped responding to Max Huber, who continued to disagree with him on the direct
5 transmission of the PoW lists.⁹⁹ Huber justified the ICRC's decision by arguing that conveying the lists
6 directly to the *Bureau* would anger the Germans and Italians who did not recognise the *France*
7 *Combattante* as a governmental body and may prompt them to cease communicating the name of Free
8 French prisoners in retaliation. Huber also subordinated any change of policy to the agreement of the
9 British who he assumed preferred to keep the existing system via the British Red Cross.
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17 The triangular relation between the Free French, the British and the Axis power complicated the
18 situation.¹⁰⁰ Under pressure from Mélamède and the changing circumstances described above, the
19 Foreign Office started signal a willingness towards a change of policy (of accepting direct
20 communication between the ICRC and the Free French) in July 1942. It backtracked, however, in
21 September for two reasons: first, the British thought that Free French prisoners were better protected if
22 they remained considered as British soldiers. For example, they took a dim view of Mélamède's
23 insistence, considering that he was 'callously sacrificing the welfare of Free French prisoners of war
24 (which most ultimately lie under British umbrella) for purely political considerations'.¹⁰¹ Second—as
25 they explained to René Pleven—the Foreign Office feared that the request of the Gaullists might 'break
26 down the entire system by which the Allied governments and the Free French in London receive
27 information about their prisoners of war'.¹⁰² For them, it was important that all men from the Allied and
28 Free French forces who were fighting under British command were treated as if they were British PoWs
29 in every respect, and that all Germans and Italians captured by the Free French were handed over to the
30 British and treated as if they were their prisoners. This position was taken to partly protect against any
31 risks of reprisals being taken by the Germans against British prisoners of war, and for these reasons they
32 postponed their decision while examining the wider implications for all the Allied armed forces.
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46 This decision was taken against a background of growing tensions between the British and the Germans
47 over the prisoners of war. Following the failure of the exchange and repatriation of sick and wounded
48 prisoners in October 1941, the Germans and the British had resumed negotiations via Swiss
49 intermediaries and appeared to be on the verge of success when the 'shackling crisis' broke out in October
50 1942. As Neville Wylie has demonstrated, the intensification of the conflict negatively affected the fate
51 of the prisoners of war.¹⁰³ After a series of incidents, tensions culminated in the shackling crisis, which
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1 left several thousand prisoners chained in both British and German PoW camps. This measure lasted a
2 couple of weeks in the camps run by the British, whereas the Germans eventually withdrew their
3 shackling order after a year, in November 1943. As the historiography has shown, the shackling crisis
4 cooled down Anglo-German POW negotiations and introduced a new dose of mistrust. The British
5 became convinced that no matter how they treated German PoWs, the Axis powers would continue to
6 align their treatment of British PoWs to their political and military interests regardless.¹⁰⁴ It is very likely
7 that alongside the Allies landing in North Africa in November 1942, the growing possibility of an Allied
8 victory and Mélamède continuous lobbying efforts through the "Allied Prisoners of War Committee",
9 the shackling crisis contributed to the Foreign Office changing their position on a direct exchange list
10 system between the ICRC and the Free French. In February 1943, and just after the victory of the Battle
11 of Stalingrad, the Foreign Office finally declared that they saw no objection to the establishment of direct
12 communications between the ICRC and the Free French (or *France Combattante*) Service.¹⁰⁵ This led
13 the ICRC to set up a new procedure that sought to restore the communications with de Gaulle that had
14 been interrupted after Max Huber's letter in July 1942.¹⁰⁶

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28 In March 1943, after two years of sustained efforts, the Free French (*France Combattante*) finally
29 obtained the right to be treated as a fully recognised member of the signatories of the Convention of 1929
30 by the ICRC, allowing the Central Agency of the ICRC to directly communicate information about its
31 own PoWs and those they had detained. Once again, the Free French obtain a partial diplomatic
32 recognition and became fully integrated into the Geneva Convention's apparatus for the transmission of
33 information concerning PoWs.¹⁰⁷ They still did not, however, have an officially recognised and
34 centralised Red Cross, despite continued lobbying efforts to obtain this for the *Comité central des*
35 *prisonniers de guerre*. In June 1943, Mélamède asked the ICRC to send the Comité all the documentation
36 usually intended for National Societies such as circulars, reports, bulletin of the ICRC and the League.¹⁰⁸
37 In addition, after the creation of the French Committee of National Liberation in Alger (3 June 1943) and
38 their formal implantation in Alger, they started to consider the creation of a coordinating committee of
39 all arms of the Red Cross in Free French territory.

III.

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54 While it is possible to get a picture of the contours of Free French and ICRC diplomatic relations from
55 1940 to 1943—marked as we have seen by a degree of mistrust and a good deal of pragmatism—it is

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2 more difficult to reconstruct an adequate and complete image of the relationship between the Free French
3 and the broader Red Cross movement (composed of the national Red Cross Societies and the League of
4 Red Cross Societies). On one hand, this history involved a multiplicity of actors in a wide range of sites
5 across the world.¹⁰⁹ These actors—often women—have only left fragmentary written traces dispersed in
6 different archival repositories. French and British diplomatic archives suggest, for instance, that **Jeannetta**
7 **S. Warner (deputy director of the British Red Cross)** played an important role in the negotiations between
8 the Free French, the British and the ICRC. She left an **interesting** oral testimony of her wartime
9 experiences at the *Imperial War Museum* in 1977. In her testimony, she recalled working with the ICRC
10 delegate Haccius, a ‘very nice man from Geneva’. According to her, the ICRC had a ‘very bad
11 reputation’ amongst the relief committees of the Allied governments.¹¹⁰ Such testimony, however,
12 remains rare. Further, we still lack detailed histories of national Red Cross societies, in English or French.
13 It is thus difficult to understand why certain links were established with some pre-war Red Cross
14 networks and not others. For instance, in Beyrouth, Margerite Catroux’s Red Cross cooperated with the
15 Yugoslav Red Cross directed **by the wife of the Consul Honoraire de Yougoslavie**.¹¹¹ The nature of this
16 collaboration is difficult to understand, as is the position of the American Red Cross or the League of
17 Red Cross Societies towards the Free French (as far as we know, the archives of the League of Red Cross
18 Societies are also quite silent).

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33 Despite these shortcomings, what strongly emerges from the archival record is the varied roles that
34 women played in this history, from their involvement in fund-raising activities to public advocacy aimed
35 at garnering Allied interest for de Gaulle’s cause. This was not new, women having been involved in Red
36 Cross philanthropy since the nineteenth century.¹¹² Yet, re-integrating their activities in the history of
37 Free French foreign relations allows for a more complex and less male-centric history of Free French
38 diplomacy, a history that is ‘more global and local at the same time’.¹¹³ It sheds lights onto the complexity
39 of political commitments and sympathies behind humanitarian work. Relief committees could serve as
40 valuable tools of cultural diplomacy for a movement with only a very limited diplomatic apparatus, as
41 Mélamède hoped (see section 1), but they could also foster anti-Gaullist tendencies.¹¹⁴ Anti-Gaullism
42 was important in the French diaspora and took many forms. It was nurtured by early supporters of de
43 Gaulle who were disappointed Petainists, or those who believed that de Gaulle had stolen the capital of
44 the Resistance for his own profit.¹¹⁵ In the United States, for instance, Gaullist sympathisers faced a
45 strong opposition. In order to garner sympathy, the *Free French Relief Committee* did, in Diane de
46 Vignemont’s words, ‘Gaullism without de Gaulle’.¹¹⁶ **In Canada, the talented Elisabeth de Miribel, the**

1
2 great grand daughter of Marshall Mac-Mahon, struggle to unite Free French representatives behind the
3 cause.¹¹⁷ In Great Britain, some earlier ‘Red cross’ supporters of de Gaulle changed their minds. The
4 Vicomtesse de la Panouse—who had presided the British Committee of the French Red Cross during the
5 First World War—collected materials and funds to organise a medical service for Free French troops in
6 the summer of 1940.¹¹⁸ In the autumn of the same year, she carried out ‘anti-Gaullist’ activities and
7 became a supporter of de Gaulle’s potential rival Catroux, according to Foreign Office sources.¹¹⁹
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14 Understanding the complexity of Free French philanthropy is not only important for our understanding
15 of Free French diplomacy, it is also crucial for a more nuanced understanding of the politics of Red Cross
16 activism. It is now a well-established fact that in wartime, Red Cross national societies were subordinated
17 to their respective governments and integrated into the war effort. A study of Free French Red Cross
18 activism complicates this notion and demonstrates that the ideological lines (between Gaullism and anti-
19 Gaullism, Petainism and Giraudism...) were constantly moving. Whether called ‘Red Cross’ or not, relief
20 committees acted at times quite independently from the political authority under which they were
21 subordinated. Humanitarian considerations often took precedence over political ones. For example, in
22 Brazzaville Marie Burnel asked for the repatriation of Vichy families and children—often in poor health
23 conditions—not in sympathy of the Vichy regime, but simply because they were source of unrest in the
24 camps.¹²⁰ This political messiness is striking when looking at the appointment of Red Cross
25 representatives, particularly those appointed by the metropolitan French Red Cross (under the Vichy
26 period) who remained in place once the regime changed, such as in Madagascar for instance.¹²¹ The case
27 of Tahiti seems to have been similar, although further research is necessary to establish exactly the role
28 of Red Cross activism in the history of this very divided French community.¹²² In 1941, at the request of
29 the Germans, who were seeking information about their own nationals there, the ICRC consider sending
30 a delegate in the island. As they could not find a Swiss national for this mission, they contacted the
31 French Red Cross to find out if they still had a committee working there. The CRF replied affirmatively,
32 saying that they were still in contact with a Red Cross Committee in the rallied territory.¹²³ In an account
33 dedicated to the life in Tahiti during the war, a former resident of the island, Claude Lestrade, noted in a
34 section dedicated to “parties” that charity evenings were frequent, notably for the benefit of the Red
35 Cross.¹²⁴ In the present state of our research, it is difficult to know what were the role, activities and
36 orientations of this committee. Was it dedicated to send news to families and relief to prisoners of war
37 or did it develop also medical activities in the island, where the health situation was particularly
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2 **alarming?**¹²⁵ Whatever is the answer, it confirms that Red Cross committees had their own dynamics,
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4 entangled both in the geopolitics of the time and the local politics of their respective localities.
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8 The situation in Brazzaville is a good example of the compromises the Free French had to make on the
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10 ground. As we saw, Monseigneur Biéchy—the French Red Cross delegate—was a representative of the
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12 ‘two Frances’: Vichy and Free France. Around this consensual personality, the delegation Générale of
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14 the French Red Cross in **French equatorial Africa** merged with the *Comité de Secours aux Blessés* that
15
16 had been created by the Gaullists. This allowed Biéchy and his collaborators to develop humanitarian
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18 activities for French PoWs such as a postal message service, which enabled Free French in French
19
20 Equatorial Africa to communicate with their families in the metropolis. Using its double role of CRF
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22 delegate and man of the Church, Biéchy also attempted to foster negotiations on the liberation of
23
24 Vichyites Internees in Brazzaville at the beginning of 1942. Such an initiative was not only beneficial
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26 for the welfare of these internees, it was also presented as a way to improve de Gaulle’s image on that
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28 matter.¹²⁶ As Vichyite propaganda declared that the internees were subject to ill-treatments, De Gaulle
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30 authorized Biéchy to visit the camps and distribute parcels sent by the CRF.¹²⁷ For de Gaulle—who
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32 argued that it was a French issue only and that Vichyite internees were not lawful prisoners of war—
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34 Biéchy's visits provided the perfect excuse to deny access to the ICRC **delegate, Fritz Arnold, to the**
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36 **French internees’ camps**, with De Gaulle arguing that someone else from the delegation was already
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38 visiting them.¹²⁸
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42 **The Brazzaville committee also organised fundraising campaigns for the Free French troops and parcel**
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44 **services for the children in the metropolis. These activities constituted a social forum for the European**
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46 **colony in Brazzaville and involved Africans in the effort to support the metropolis. They drew on pre-**
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48 **war initiatives of social medicine, which paradoxically often contributed to worsening the living**
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50 **conditions in these regions.**¹²⁹ **European women played a distinctive role within them.** For example,
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52 Marcelle Rottenfluc, was a doctor in charge of women and children’s clinics in Bacongo and
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54 Poto-Poto.¹³⁰ Before the war, Rottenfluc’ clinics were aimed at educating and providing material help to
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56 African women considered to be the ‘slave of their husband[s]’ and ‘unable to feed adequately their young
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58 children’.¹³¹ Along with other European women in Brazzaville, she became involved in discussing and
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60 preparing the provision of welfare for wounded Free French soldiers.¹³² In the difficult economic context
of the **Free French Africa** during the war, the Brazzaville committee welcomed the generosity of the
American Red Cross. In 1942, the Brazzaville Committee was delighted to receive the visit of M. Taylor,

1
2 the Vice-president of the American Red Cross. According to Marie Burnel, the ‘magnificent donations’
3 from the American Red Cross allowed the health service to function.¹³³ As Eric Jennings demonstrated,
4 ‘American goods flooded into the AFL’.¹³⁴ This American aid was at times difficult to accept for the
5 Free French, who did not want to be pitied. As Géraud Létang notes, the Free French were obsessed by
6 their dramatic loss of influence and sought by any means to ‘[regain] their status’.¹³⁵
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12 The situation in the Levant provides another interesting example of Free French relief adjustments on
13 the ground. In December 1940, Marguerite Catroux, *Général Catroux’s wife*, created the *Bureau*
14 *d’Assistance* in Cairo to provide medical care to wounded Free French soldiers in the Middle East and
15 collect donations from other local relief committees across the territories rallied to de Gaulle.¹³⁶ *Drawing*
16 *on her experience as nurse during the First World War, she worked with the Free French surgeon Henri*
17 *Fruchaud to put together a mobile surgical unit for Free French troops.*¹³⁷ But the donations collected
18 were sparse and largely insufficient.¹³⁸ In July 1941, the British and Free French drove Vichy French
19 troops out of Syria and Lebanon, giving De Gaulle an important foothold in the Empire and two
20 prestigious capitals.¹³⁹ After the signature of the Armistice at Acre, Marguerite Catroux became the
21 *Présidente Générale* of the French Red Cross in the Levant mandates, *playing an important and symbolic*
22 *role.*¹⁴⁰ She took over Red Cross dispensaries for local population, including the anti-tuberculosis
23 dispensary in Damas (created in 1933) and *la goutte de lait* (drop of milk) in Beyrouth (created in 1939).
24 She also supervised the distribution of desperately needed medication for malaria and syphilis in North
25 Syria for charitable and propaganda reasons.¹⁴¹ In addition to these relief activities aimed at the local
26 population, *Marguerite* Catroux created new soldiers’ *foyers*—a service for PoW parcels and messages
27 in Beyrouth, a convalescent house in Hasroun, Tripoli for Free French aviators, as well as a summer
28 camp for children of Free French soldiers.¹⁴²
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43 Politically and financially, the position of Catroux’ Red Cross was precarious. As a French official report
44 puts it: given the politically tense situation in the mandate, the Red Cross was forced to demand money
45 from the local population more ‘discreetly’ than in other territories of the French Empire.¹⁴³ Catroux’
46 Red Cross was attached to the *Bureau Central d’Assistance*, which collected donations from other local
47 relief committees, *including the Free French Fund directed by Anne Pleven in New York and the ‘Croix-*
48 *Rouges françaises des Indes’, the French Red Cross from New Caledonia and the Compagnie des*
49 *Tramways in Cairo.*¹⁴⁴ *These donations were insufficient, however.* In this context, the Red Cross largely
50 depended on donations from Syrian and Lebanese donors.¹⁴⁵ Free French dependence on Syrian and
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2 Lebanese benefactors was a problem symbolically as the Free French had to ask for money from local
3 donors to feed and provide for their own troops. This ran contrary to the Free French policy of prestige
4 and cast it in the role of a 'beggar' (*position de mendicité*), when the situation required for France not to
5 appear to be a '*faire figure de pauvre*'.¹⁴⁶ According to Free French sources, Syrian and Lebanese actors
6 become more assertive with the Red Cross and began demanding their own national Red Cross
7 societies.¹⁴⁷ According to French sources, the request of the president of the Lebanese Red Cross
8 Committee to create a Lebanese Red Cross was turned down by the ICRC, but the French were aware
9 that the question would be posed again at the end of the conflict and that they would witness the creation
10 of a Syrian Red Crescent and a Lebanese Red Cross. Marguerite Catroux also faced the concurrence of
11 British relief operations. Not only were the French financially dependent on Syrian and Lebanese
12 benefactors, but they also failed to recruit society ladies amongst the Free French community who were
13 able and willing to go abroad to nurse French soldiers.¹⁴⁸ While Free France had very high ambitions,
14 the position of the Red Cross (as more broadly that of the Free French) was that of a weakened and poor
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IV.

31 This article has examined how Free French diplomats, jurists, medical doctors, philanthropists and
32 missionaries dispersed across the Free French 'archipelago' corresponded with, interacted and (re)built
33 their relationships with representatives of the Red Cross across the world. In doing so, it has made three
34 important contributions to the historiography of the Free French and the Red Cross Movements. First, at
35 the diplomatic level, this article has revealed the significance of the affiliation to the Red Cross for a
36 committee-in-exile that operated outside the traditional diplomatic framework but for whom the rules of
37 law and juridical legitimacy were of utmost importance.¹⁴⁹ Indeed, Free French used their contacts with
38 the ICRC and interpretations of the Geneva conventions to try to strengthen their position worldwide.
39 Their task was not made any easier by the Swiss organisation, which refused to give them formal
40 recognition and was reluctant to communicate directly with them about PoWs. The easing of the situation
41 was ultimately the result of both French determination and the evolution of the balance of power in the
42 war, as well as the evolution of the demands and attitudes of the other belligerents (Axis, Vichyite and
43 the British). This illustrates the complexity of the reciprocity mechanism governing PoWs protection. In
44 March 1943, after years of sustained efforts, the Free French finally obtained a partial diplomatic
45 recognition within the Red Cross apparatus. After receiving the green light from the British, the ICRC
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2 agreed to consider the Free French as a fully recognised member of the signatories of the Convention of
3 1929 to whom the Central Agency of the ICRC could directly communicate about PoWs. In other words,
4 the *Fighting French* became fully reintegrated in the Geneva Convention apparatus, but only for the
5 transmission of information about PoWs.
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10 Second, at a meso-level of Red Cross actors, this article has demonstrated that the elaboration of Red
11 Cross structures in 1940-1943 was multi-directional and multi-sited. Red Cross committees, such as the
12 Brazzaville committee, did not need to be formally recognised to be active on the ground. This
13 complicates the task of the historian with regards to clearly identifying their position in the broader
14 history of humanitarianism during the Second World War. Some of the local Red Cross actors oscillated
15 between Vichy and Free France, Gaullism and anti-Gaullism. In Brazzaville, the French Red Cross
16 delegate Monseigneur Biéchy was in fact a representative of the ‘two Frances’, Vichy and Free France.
17 Third, and as a result of the latter, this article has demonstrated that ‘Red cross’ committees dispersed
18 across the rallied territories had their own dynamics entangled both in the geopolitics of the time and the
19 local politics of their respective spaces. In some cases—as in the Levant mandates—these committees
20 began to mirror the fragility of Free France’s policy of grandeur. Free French dependence on Syrian and
21 Lebanese benefactors ran contrary to their political ambition, placing them in highly dependent and
22 symbolically problematic position (*‘position de mendicité’*).
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34 Despite these findings, it might still be tempting to dismiss the question of Free French relations with the
35 Red Cross Movement as small and inconsequential issues within the broader histories of both the Red
36 Cross Movement and the Resistance. On the one hand, even at their peak number, the Free French were
37 a very small armed force representing only a fraction of the Allied armies. On the other, the Red Cross
38 was just one aspect of the rich diplomatic activities deployed by the Free French and de Gaulle in their
39 search for legitimacy on the international scene. Regardless of this, we posit here that a close examination
40 of Free French Red Cross relations enables us to better understand both French approaches to
41 humanitarian law and French philanthropy. First, this article illuminates the history of a lost international
42 past, reminding us of the complexity of Red Cross philanthropy and the plurality of its transnational
43 networks across the world. Second, it enables us to better understand the reorientation of French official
44 attitudes towards **humanitarian law** and the ICRC in the post-war period. As Boyd van Dijk argues, the
45 Second World War prompted a radical shift in French official approaches to humanitarian law with —
46 he asserts— few French diplomats expressing serious interest in **the protection of civilians** prior the
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war.¹⁵⁰ In 1945, the French attempted to gain recognition for their wartime efforts by ‘codifying the right of collective resistance’, infusing human rights law into humanitarian law in order to protect individual rights in armed conflicts and lowering the convention scope for the protection of prisoners of war. Our article reveals that in the early years of the war, the Free French showed great interest in the issue of the protection of prisoners of war, as they were aware that this was central to their own legitimacy and recognition on the international scene. Yet, in their efforts at placing the Free French movement within the rule of law and inserting it within the Red Cross apparatus, they put forward legal arguments that could be later used by national liberation movements, facing similar obstacles in the context of decolonization.¹⁵¹ It remains to be discovered whether Free French jurists were cognizant that their legal arguments to the ICRC could potentially serve to enable national liberation movements.

¹ R. Cassin, *Les Hommes partis de rien: Le réveil de la France abattue (1940–1941)* (Paris, 1974), 281.

² J.-L. Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1996); M. Vaïsse ‘Rebâtir une diplomatie’, in *De Gaulle Chef de Guerre. De l’appel de Londres à la libération de Paris, 1940–1944*, ed. Fondation Charles de Gaulle (Paris, 2008), 407–426.

³ G. Chauvy, *La Croix-Rouge dans la guerre, 1935–1947* (Paris, 2000); J.-P. Le Crom, ‘La Croix-Rouge française pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale: La neutralité en question’, *Vingtième Siècle*, (2009) 1, 101, 149–162; J.-P. Le Crom, *Au secours Maréchal! L’instrumentalisation de l’humanitaire (1940–1944)* (Paris, 2013); R. Belot *Aux frontières de la Liberté. Vichy-Madrid-Alger-Londres. S’évader de France sous l’occupation* (Paris, 1998); J.-M. Dreyfus, ‘Comité International de la Croix Rouge’, in *Dictionnaire de la France Libre*, ed. F. Broche, G. Caïtuli, J.-F. Muracciole (Paris, 2010), 388–389.

⁴ G. Piketty, ‘La France Libre’, in *Dictionnaire de Gaulle*, ed. C. Andrieu, P. Braud, G. Piketty (Paris, 2006), 516–521.

⁵ S. Albertelli, *Atlas de la France Libre. De Gaulle et la France Libre, une aventure politique* (Paris, 2010); T. Vaisset, ‘L’amiral Thierry d’Argenlieu: La mer, la foi, la France’ (PhD, Université Paris-Ouest Nanterre, 2014); G. Létang, ‘Mirages d’une rébellion. Être Français libre au Tchad (1940–1943)’ (PhD, Sciences Po Paris), 2019, 57.

⁶ Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, vol. 1, 133.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 44.

⁸ V.-Y. Ghebali, *La France en guerre et les organisations internationales, 1939–1945* (Paris, 1969); J Winter, A. Prost, *René Cassin and Human Rights: From the Great War to the Universal Declaration* (Cambridge, 2013), 117.

⁹ Article 10, Convention d’armistice entre la France et l’Allemagne, Rethondes, 22 June 1940; Article 14, Convention d’armistice entre la France et l’Italie, Villa Incisa (Olgiata), 24 June 1940.

¹⁰ J.-L., Crémieux-Brilhac ‘La France Libre et l’État républicain’, in *Serviteurs de l’État*, ed. M. O. Baruch, V. Duclert (Paris, 2000), 528–538; R. Ulrich-Pier ‘Reconnaissances diplomatiques de la France Libre’, in *Dictionnaire de la France Libre*, 1235–36.

¹¹ On the relation between the French and the British regarding the POW questions: M. Thomas, ‘Captives of their Countrymen: Free French and Vichy French POWs in Africa and the Middle East, 1940–43’, in *Prisoners of War and their Captors in World War II*, ed. B. Moore and K. Fedorowich (Oxford, 1996), 87–118; B. Moore, ‘Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943–1945’, *War in History*, 7, 2 (2000), 180–198.

¹² S. O’Connor and G. Piketty ‘Foreign Fighters and multinational armies: from civil conflicts to coalition wars, 1848–2015’, *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d’histoire*, 27 (2020), 1–11.

¹³ J. Winter, A. Prost *Rene Cassin and Human Rights*, 114.

¹⁴ The literature on French prisoners of war during the Second World War has mainly focused on those of May June 1940: F. Théofilakis (ed.), *Les prisonniers de guerre français en 1940* (Paris, 2022); S. Frank, *Hostages of Empire: Colonial Prisoners of War in Vichy France* (Lincoln, 2021); R. Scheck, *French Colonial Soldiers in German Captivity during World War II* (Cambridge, 2014).

¹⁵ R. Fathi ‘Sovereignty, Democracy and Neutrality: French Foreign Policy and the National Patriotic Humanitarianism of the French Red Cross, 1919–1928’, *Contemporary European History*, Published online 9 November 2021; for the definition of ‘soft power’, J. Nye, *Soft Power, The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York, 2004), x.

¹⁶ Chauvy, *La Croix-Rouge dans la guerre*, 116–123.

¹⁷ Le Crom, *Au secours Maréchal!*

¹⁸ J. Mallet *Du Joug à la Délivrance. Paris, 1940–1945* (Paris, 1974), 60.

¹⁹ Le Crom, *Au secours Maréchal!*, 257.

²⁰ N. Wylie, M. Oppenheimer, J. Crossland (ed.), *The Red Cross Movement: Myths, practices and turning points* (Manchester, 2020). J. Crossland, *Britain and the International Committee of the Red Cross* (Basingstoke, 2014); S. Farré *Colis de guerre: Secours alimentaire et organisations humanitaires, 1914–1947* (Rennes, 2019).

²¹ On the ICRC during the Second World War: J.-C. Favez, ‘1942: le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, les déportations et les camps’, *Vingtième Siècle. Revue d’histoire*, 21, 21, (1989), 45–56; J.-C. Favez, *Une mission impossible? Le CICR, les déportés et les camps de concentration nazis*, (Paris, 1988); I. Vonèche Cardia, *Neutralité et engagement. Les relations entre le Comité international de la Croix-Rouge et le gouvernement suisse (1938–1945)* (Lausanne, 2012); D. Debons, *L’assistance spirituelle aux prisonniers de guerre. Un aspect de l’action humanitaire durant la Seconde Guerre mondiale* (Paris, 2012); S. Farré ‘The ICRC and the detainees in Nazi concentration camps (1942–1945)’ *International Review of the Red Cross*, 88 (2012), 1381–1408; G. Steinacher, *Humanitarians at War: The Red Cross in the Shadow of the Holocaust* (Oxford, 2017); F. Cahen, ‘Le Comité International de la Croix-Rouge (CICR) et les visites de camps. Étude d’une controverse’, *Revue d’Histoire de la Shoah*, 172, 2 (2001), 7–62. I. Herrmann, *L’humanitaire en question* (Paris, 2018).

²² J. Irwin, ‘Taming Total War: Great War-Era American Humanitarianism and its Legacies’, *Diplomatic History*, 38, 4 (2014), 763–775.

- 23 Fathi, 'Sovereignty, Democracy and Neutrality'.
- 24 E. Cartier 'L'Etat de droit dans la doctrine de la France Libre', in *De Gaulle Chef de Guerre*, 49–60.
- 25 16 November 1940, 'Déclaration Organique de la France libre'; Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre*, vol. 1, 177; Winter, Prost, *René Cassin and Human Rights*, 122–23.
- 26 S. Albertelli, *Elles ont suivi de Gaulle: Histoire du Corps des Volontaires françaises* (Paris, 2020), 58.
- 27 T[he] N[atational] A[rchives], Kew, FO 1055/5.
- 28 A[rchives du] M[inistère des] A[ffaires] É[trangères], 476, National Executive Chairman to General Charles de Gaulle, 8 September 1940; Question de l'équipement des FFL en ambulances et matériel sanitaire par les organisations volontaires américaines, 1er Février 1941.
- 29 Created in February in New York, the *Free French Relief Committee* sent more than 100,000 dollars' worth of medical material to the Free French in 1941. De Vignemont, 'La France Libre et la "bataille de New York"'.
30 Albertelli, *Elles ont suivi de Gaulle*, 58.
- 31 Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre*, vol. 1, 236.
- 32 C. d'Abzac-Epezy, 'Le rôle de l'armée dans le processus de légitimation du général de Gaulle 1940–44', in *De Gaulle Chef de Guerre*, 299–318, 299.
- 33 J.-F. Muracciolo, *Les Français Libres. L'autre résistance* (Paris, 2004), 33–36; E. Jennings, *Free French Africa in World War Two* (Cambridge, 2015), 4.
- 34 J. Jackson, 'L'homme du 18 juin: vérité et légende', in *De Gaulle Chef de Guerre*, 23–33.
- 35 AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, Le Médecin Commandant G. de Cailly à Monsieur le Chef d'Etat Major, 26 October 1940.
- 36 AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, M. Burnel pour M. le professeur Cassin, 'La Croix-Rouge en Afrique française libre', 27 February 1942. **A Red Cross Committee had been active in Brazzaville at the beginning of the 1920s, but according to Marie Burnel notes, it seems that it was no longer active.**
A[rchives N[ationales de la] R[épublique du] C[ongo], A[rchives de l'] A[frique] E[quatoriale] F[rançaise] (Brazzaville), GG 452.
- 37 AMAE, 476, B. Mélamède, Creation of la Croix Rouge des FFL, 4 November 1940.
- 38 AMAE, 476, Télégramme du Marquis de Lothian, Washington, 23 November 1940.
- 39 In 1940, these territories were: Nouvelles Hébrides (20 July), Établissements Français des Indes (9 September), Établissements français d'Océanie Tahiti (2 September), Nouvelle Calédonie (20 September), **Afrique équatoriale française** (26 August, 10 November for Gabon), Cameroun (27 August); Albertelli, *Atlas de la France Libre*, 18.
- 40 AMAE, 476, B. Mélamède, Création de la Croix Rouge des FFL, 4 November 1940.
- 41 AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, Bernard Melamède, note manuscrite, 4 November 1940. The Free French had to manage colonial economies with the support of a previously rival allied power. D. A. Foulk, 'Free French Francs? Wartime Monetary Sovereignty (1940–1944)', *French History*, 36, 2 (2022), 230–250.
- 42 On the Red Cross Movement and colonialism in Africa: H. Ashford, 'The Red Cross and the Establishment of Maternal and Infant Welfare in the 1930s Gold Coast', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 47, 3 (2019), 514–541; E. Baughan, 'Rehabilitating an Empire: Humanitarian Collusion with the Colonial State during the Kenyan Emergency, ca. 1954–1960', *Journal of British Studies*, 59 (2020), 57–79; M.-L. Desgrandchamps, 'Entre ambitions universalistes et préjugés raciaux. La mission du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge en Afrique méridionale et centrale au début des années 1960', *Histoire@Politique*, 41 (2020), 40–54.
- 43 ANRC, AAEF, GG454, Le Médecin Colonel Vaucel, Directeur du Service de Santé du Cameroun à Monsieur le Gouverneur du Cameroun français, Yaoundé, 31 March 1941.
- 44 Archives de l'Institut de Médecine Tropical du Service de Santé des Armées, 153, Établissements Français dans l'Inde, Service de santé, rapport annuel 1940, partie médicale, 140–142.
- 45 R. Belot, 'Les comités de la France Libre en Amérique Latine pendant la guerre: enjeu symbolique, politique et diplomatique', in *De Gaulle et l'Amérique Latine*, ed. M. Vaisse (Rennes, 2014), 45–68; MAE, Londres-Alger, 476, Doc 13. 4 November 1940.
- 46 C. Faucher, L. Humbert 'Beyond de Gaulle and beyond London: The French external resistance and its international networks', *European Review of History*, 25, 2 (2018), 195–221.
- 47 C. Bougeard, *René Pleven. Un Français Libre en politique* (Paris, 1995), 110. De Vignemont 'La France Libre et la Bataille de New York'; E. Loyer, *Paris à New York: Intellectuels et artistes français en exil (1940–1947)* (Paris, 2007), 167–202.
- 48 'Le Comité de la France Libre en Australie', *Revue de la France Libre*, 126 (1960); J. Lawrey *The Cross of Lorraine in the South Pacific. Australia and the Free French Movement, 1940-1942* (Canberra, 1982); T.Roe 'Les Français d'Australie et la France libre (1940-1944)', *Outre-mer*, 95, 360–361 (2008), 209–222.
- 49 R. Belot, 'Les comités de la France Libre en Amérique Latine pendant la guerre'.
- 50 C. Faucher, *Propaganda, Gender and Cultural Power: Projections and Perceptions of France in Britain, c. 1880–1944* (Oxford, 2022), 158.
- 51 TNA, Kew, FO 1055/5, *Amis des Volontaires Français*, Donations from Abroad, September 1940 – October 1941.
- 52 *Les Affaires Étrangères et le corps diplomatique français*, II, ed. J. Baillou (Paris, 1984), 563.
- 53 In another context, E. Piller, 'Beyond Hoover. Rewriting the History of the Commission for Relief in Belgium (CRB) through female involvement', *The International History Review*, advance online (2022), 1–23.
- 54 AN, 382AP/32, D33, B, Dossier 4, Le Médecin Capitaine Ray à Monsieur le Lieutenant Colonel Fontaine, 16 November 1940.
- 55 Crémieux-Brilhac *La France libre*, vol.1, 154.
- 56 AN, 382AP/32, D33, B, Dossier 4, Le Médecin Commandant G. de Cailly à Monsieur le Chef d'Etat Major, 26 October 1940.
- 57 A[rchives of the] I[nternational] C[ommittee of the] R[ed] C[ross], BG 070-002, Report of a meeting with representatives from General De Gaulle Headquarters to discuss possibilities of giving Red Cross Protection to any men of General De Gaulle forces to any men who may fall into the hands of the enemy, 8 November 1940.
- 58 AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, D33, B, Le Médecin Capitaine Ray à Monsieur le Lieutenant Colonel Fontaine, 16 November 1940, Statuts de la Société de Secours aux Blessés des Forces Françaises Libres, November 1940.
- 59 AN 382AP/32, Dossier 4, D33 - B. Croix-Rouge France libre, lettre de Suzanne Ferrière à René Cassin, 15 July 1941.
- 60 AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, D33, B, Télégramme chiffré de Pleven à Haut-Commissaire, Brazzaville, 10 May 1941; S[ervice] H[istorique de la] D[éfense], GR16P521554 e.
- 61 AICRC, séance du Comité, 9 May 1940.
- 62 365^e circulaire du Comité international de la Croix-Rouge, 17 September 1941, https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/CIRC_1932_1941.pdf. CICR, *Rapport du CICR sur son activité pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale (1939-1945), Vol. I*, (Genève, 1948), 162–166.
- 63 The ICRC had worked with the two of them without recognizing them formally: 331^e circulaire de la Croix-Rouge, 16 October 1936, https://library.icrc.org/library/docs/DOC/CIRC_1932_1941.pdf. But the Swiss organisation had not hesitated much before establishing connections with the dissident Franquist Red Cross. S. Farré, *L'affaire Henny* (Genève, 2022).
- 64 The ICRC refuted this claim, saying that it did not formally recognize these committees, had only working relations with them, and **that their situation was very different**. AICRC, B G 070-002.

- ⁶⁵ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, D33, B, Bernard Mélamède to René Cassin, 29 August 1941. On Free French relations with Czech authorities, see A. Marès 'La France libre et l'Europe centrale et orientale (1940-1944)', *Revue des études slaves*, 54, 3 (1982), 305-336.
- ⁶⁶ Winter, Prost, *René Cassin and Human Rights*, 151.
- ⁶⁷ Message du Maréchal Pétain au CICR, *CRF Circulaire d'Information*, October 1941, N. 7.
- ⁶⁸ AICRC, A PV, Séance de coordination, 15 October 1941.
- ⁶⁹ M.-L. Desgrandchamps, 'Un évêque à la Croix-Rouge', *Revue historique des armées*, 307 (2023).
- ⁷⁰ Jennings, *Free French Africa in World War Two*, 85–86.
- ⁷¹ AICRC, A PV, Séance des délégations, 11 September 1942.
- ⁷² AICRC, BG 070-008, télégramme de Pictet pour Sicé, 16 October 1941.
- ⁷³ J. Crossland, *Britain and the International Committee of the Red Cross* (Basingstoke, 2014), 63–67. On protecting power see the double special issue: 'Entre guerres et ruptures. La protection dans les relations internationales', *Relations internationales*, 143, 3 and 144, 4 (2010).
- ⁷⁴ For example, in November 1943, the ICRC became the protecting power of the German in French hands, as having a traditional protecting power would have meant a form a recognition. Moore, 'Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943–1945', 188.
- ⁷⁵ AICRC, BG 070-001, note from Marcel Junod, 17 February 1941.
- ⁷⁶ AICRC, BG 070-009.
- ⁷⁷ AICRC, A PV, séance d'information et de consultation, 20 February 1941.
- ⁷⁸ AICRC, BG 070-001, note from Marcel Junod, 17 February 1941.
- ⁷⁹ AICRC, BG 070-011.
- ⁸⁰ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, Rapport Eliane Brault, September 1941.
- ⁸¹ E. Nadaud, 'Eliane Brault, un parcours au féminin, radical, antifasciste, progressiste, maçonnique et féministe (1895–1982)', *Histoire @ Politique*, 3, 9 (2009), <www.histoire-politique.fr>; Albertelli, *Elles ont suivi de Gaulle*, 199.
- ⁸² TNA, FO371/28535, Note concernant l'entretien, sans caractère officiel, à la Croix Rouge Britannique entre Miss Warner, General Petit, Lieutenant Villers, Docteur Junod, Monsieur Haccius, Mrs St. Martin Watts, 27 March 1941.
- ⁸³ AICRC, BG 070-004, BG 070-014 and B G 070-016.
- ⁸⁴ On Italian internees and prisoners of war in Africa: C. Dubois, 'Internés et prisonniers de guerre italiens dans les camps de l'empire français de 1940 à 1945', *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 156 (1989), 53-71.
- ⁸⁵ AICRC, A PV, Journal, 28 May 1941.
- ⁸⁶ Thomas, 'Captives of their Countrymen: Free French and Vichy French POWs in Africa and the Middle East, 1940–1943', 87–118.
- ⁸⁷ AMAE 476, Letter from Warner to Dejean, 13 October 1941.
- ⁸⁸ AMAE, Londres-Alger, 470, Letter from Affaires Exterieures (Londres) to Miss S. J. Warner, Deputy Director, War Organisation of the British Red Cross Society, 15 April 1941.
- ⁸⁹ AICRC, B G 070-004, letter from G. Escarra to Miss Warner, 4 May 1941. On repatriations: SHD, 6H14.
- ⁹⁰ Dreyfus, 'Comité international de la Croix-Rouge'.
- ⁹¹ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, Max Huber à De Gaulle, 1 August 1941.
- ⁹² AMAE 476 (3), letter and list of Italian prisoners sent by Mélamède to the ICRC, 15 January 1942.
- ⁹³ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, Lettre de De Gaulle à Max Hubert, President du Comité International de la Croix Rouge, 8 May 1942.
- ⁹⁴ AICRC, BG 070-002, letter from M. Huber to de Gaulle, 10 February 1942; letter from de Gaulle to M. Huber, 8 May 1942.
- ⁹⁵ Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Geneva, 27 July 1929, <<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gc-pow-1929>>
- ⁹⁶ Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France Libre*, vol. 1, 471.
- ⁹⁷ Ibid., 410.
- ⁹⁸ AICRC, A PV, réunion des chefs de services, 6 August 1942.
- ⁹⁹ AICRC, BG 070-002, from Huber to De Gaulle, 8 July 1942.
- ¹⁰⁰ Thomas, 'Captives of their Countrymen'. On the years 1943–1945: Moore, 'Unruly Allies: British Problems with the French Treatment of Axis Prisoners of War, 1943-1945'. British fears increased as reports of mistreatment of the German and Italian prisoners in French controlled camps resurfaced at the end of 1943.
- ¹⁰¹ TNA, FO 892-151, letter from R. L. Speaight to Kingsley Rooker, 23 September 1942.
- ¹⁰² TNA, FO 892-151, letter from Kingsley Rooker to Pleven, 24 September 1942.
- ¹⁰³ N. Wylie, *Barbed wire diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the politics of prisoners of war, 1939–1945* (Oxford, 2010), 122–154.
- ¹⁰⁴ Wylie, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy*, 155–185. S. P. Mackenzie, 'The Shackling Crisis: A Case-Study in the Dynamics of Prisoner-of-War Diplomacy in the Second World War', *International History Review*, 17, 1 (1995), 78–98.
- ¹⁰⁵ AMAE, 476, letter from J. S. Somers Cocks to Bernard Mélamède, 25 February 1943.
- ¹⁰⁶ AICRC, BG 070-002.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ulrich-Pier, 'Reconnaissances diplomatiques de la France Libre', 1235–36.
- ¹⁰⁸ AICRC, BG 070-002, lettre du délégué du CICR à Londres, 28 June 1943.
- ¹⁰⁹ In Great Britain—as Sebastien Albertelli observes—a few female ambulance drivers who wore the Red Cross uniform during the campaign of France, fled across the Channel and joined de Gaulle's organisation in 1940. Albertelli, *Elles ont suivi de Gaulle*, 50–65.
- ¹¹⁰ I[mperial] W[ar] M[useum], catalogue number: 997, Jeannetta Sydney Warner, 1977, 2 reels, reel 2, 11'20, and reel 2, 13'50.
- ¹¹¹ 'A la Croix Rouge Yougoslave', *En route. Bulletin des Forces françaises Libres*, July 1943.
- ¹¹² On an earlier period, Frédéric Pineau *Les femmes au service de la France* (Paris, 2006), Fiona Reid, Sharif Gemie 'Constructing citizenship? Women, welfare and refugees in France, 1939–1940', *Women History Review* 20, 3 (2011), 347–368.
- ¹¹³ Piller, 'Beyond Hoover'.
- ¹¹⁴ On the anti-gaullism of Marguerite Catroux, J. Jackson *A certain idea of France. The Life of Charles de Gaulle* (London, 2018), 153 ; On Free French philanthropy and the 'battle of New York', D. de Vignemont 'La France Libre et la 'bataille de New York', unpublished conference paper, Musée de l'Ordre de la Libération, 18 March 2021. On suspicions of anti-gaullism from Mme de la Panouse : NA, FO 371/24361, French Liaison Officer (Liverpool), 15 October 1940.
- ¹¹⁵ C. Faucher 'From Gaullism to Anti-Gaullism: Denis Saurat and the French Cultural Institute in Wartime London', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 54, 1 (2019), 60–81.
- ¹¹⁶ De Vignemont 'La France Libre et la bataille de New York'.
- ¹¹⁷ E. Amyot *Le Québec entre Pétain et de Gaulle. Vichy, La France Libre et les Canadiens Français, 1940-1945* (Montreal, 1999), 119-120; 161.
- ¹¹⁸ S[ervice] H[istorique de la] D[éfense], 4P1, Historique des FFL, Chapitre XVIII, La Direction du Service de santé.
- ¹¹⁹ TNA, FO 371/24361, French Liaison Officer (Liverpool), 15 October 1940.

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- ¹²⁰ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, M. Burnel pour M. le professeur Cassin, 'La Croix-Rouge en Afrique française libre', 27 February 1942.
- ¹²¹ AMAE, 476 (3), telegram from the Haut-commissariat in Tananarive to the Comité national français, 6 June 1943.
- ¹²² T. Vaisset 'Maintenir et défendre la France Libre aux antipodes', in *Les Français Libres et le monde*, ed. S. Cornil-Ferrot and P. Oulmont (Paris, 2013), 79 ; E. de Curtion *Tahiti 40. Récit du ralliement à la France libre des Établissements français d'Océanie* (Paris, 1973).
- ¹²³ AICRC, A PV, séance des délégations, 16 July 1942.
- ¹²⁴ C. Lestrade, 'Quelques souvenirs de Tahiti entre 1942 et 1945 (1ère partie)', *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*, 94 (1992), 127-142.
- ¹²⁵ G. Chauliac, *Le Service de santé de la France Libre, 1940 à 1943* (Paris, 1994), 76.
- ¹²⁶ Desgrandchamps, 'Un évêque à la Croix-Rouge'.
- ¹²⁷ ANRC, AAEF, GG 453-03, lettre de Biéchy au gouverneur général, 9 October 1942 ; AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, M. Burnel pour M. le professeur Cassin, 'La Croix-Rouge en Afrique française libre', 27 February 1942.
- ¹²⁸ AICRC, BG 070-002, de Gaulle to M. Huber, 8 May 1942.
- ¹²⁹ G. Lachenal, *Le médecin qui voulait être roi* (Paris, 2017). On the situation in AEF before and during the war: J.-P. Daughton, *In the Forest of No Joy: The Congo-Océan Railroad and the Tragedy of French Colonialism* (New York, 2021); A. Keese, 'Hunting 'wrongdoers' and 'vagrants': the long-term perspective of flight, evasion, and persecution in colonial and postcolonial Congo-Brazzaville, 1920–1980', *African Economic History*, 44 (2016), pp. 152–180.
- ¹³⁰ SHD, GR16P521554, Marcelle Rottenfluc.
- ¹³¹ IMTSSA, 160, Inspection Générale des Services Sanitaires et Médicaux, Rapport annuel par le Médecin Général Vaucel, Inspecteur General des Services sanitaires et médicaux civils de l'Afrique équatoriale française, 92–102.
- ¹³² SHD, GR16P521554 e
- ¹³³ AN, 382AP/32, Dossier 4, D33, B, M. Burnel pour M. le professeur Cassin, 'La Croix-Rouge en Afrique française libre', 27 February 1942.
- ¹³⁴ Jennings, *Free French Africa in World War Two*, 178.
- ¹³⁵ Létang 'Mirage d'une rébellion'.
- ¹³⁶ 'Maison d'Accueil et de convalescence de Sofar', *En route... Forces Françaises Libres au Levant*, 18, 15 September 1942 ; J. Godard, *L'œuvre politique, économique et sociale de la France Combattante en Syrie et au Liban* (Beyrouth, 1943), 186.
- ¹³⁷ *Le Service de santé dans les Combats de la Libération*, ed. G. Hugonot (Paris, 1953), 156.
- ¹³⁸ Létang, 'Mirage d'une rébellion', 458.
- ¹³⁹ Crémieux-Brilhac, *La France libre*, vol. 1, 212.
- ¹⁴⁰ Within the Free French movement, Madame Catroux was known for her anti-gaullism and for the ambition she had for her husband: Jackson, *A certain idea of France*, 153; On her symbolic role, E. Thompson, *Colonial Citizens. Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (Columbia, 1999), 240.
- ¹⁴¹ SHD, 4H337, Rapport sur l'organisation et l'activité de la Croix-Rouge Française d'Alep, 31 December 1940, 9.
- ¹⁴² SHD, 4H337, Rapport sur l'activité du dispensaire de la Croix-Rouge Française, Section Franco-Libanaise, 1940; Question à traiter avec le siège de la Croix-Rouge Française à Paris, exposé général de la situation au Liban et en Syrie.
- ¹⁴³ SHD, 4H337, Rapport du Docteur Escher, délégué général de la Croix-Rouge Française pour la Syrie et le Liban, 14 June 1944.
- ¹⁴⁴ Hugonot *Le Service de santé dans les Combats de la Libération*, 156.
- ¹⁴⁵ On gift from Red Cross of Pondichery, see SHD, 4H337, Le chef d'Escadron May à Général d'Armée Catroux, 5 December 1942.
- ¹⁴⁶ SHD, 4H337, Question à traiter avec le siège de la Croix Rouge Française à Paris, exposé général de la situation au Liban et en Syrie.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁸ SHD, 4H337, Question à traiter avec le siege de la Croix Rouge Française à Paris, exposé general de la situation au Liban et en Syrie, p.9.
- ¹⁴⁹ E. Cartier 'L'Etat de droit dans la doctrine de la France Libre', 49–60.
- ¹⁵⁰ B. Van Dijk, *Preparing for war: The making of the Geneva Conventions* (Oxford, 2022), 311-312. The author highlights the significant role played by Georges Cahen Salvador.
- ¹⁵¹ We would like to thank Boyd van Dijk for his feedback and for suggesting that we investigate the legacies of the legal arguments put forward by the Free French.