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PREFACE

On the whole, the year 1954 presented for the International Committee of the Red Cross —the founder body of the Red Cross and the promoter of the Geneva Conventions—the same characteristics as in 1953.

The ICRC continued its efforts for the prevention of human suffering in its cruellest forms ; it did its utmost, though not always with success, to assist military and civilian victims of conflicts and disturbances, and their after-effects.

The improved conditions in Europe enabled the ICRC to curtail certain aspects of its work of assistance and protection resulting from the world conflict and its effects. In other parts of the world, however, a different evolution of events, resulting from various causes, had given rise to new distress ; in spite of the agreements which, within about twelve months' interval, brought the hostilities in Korea and Indo China to a close, disquiet and difficulties persist and cause very real anxiety for the future.

As in previous years, the ICRC continued to ensure that the fundamental principles and doctrine of the institution were upheld. It pursued its efforts for the dissemination of the Conventions and their scrupulous application. During the year, with the collaboration of international experts, it examined the question of the protection of civilian populations from the dangers of aerial warfare and blind weapons ; further, it pursued the study of the question of assistance to political detainees, whose status is not expressly covered by the Geneva Conventions. The ICRC submitted the first results of its work on these subjects to Governments and National Red Cross (Red Crescent, Red Lion and Sun) Societies,

and to national and international agencies whose co-operation was considered to be of assistance in its work.

As in previous years, the report gives all details of the planning and evolution of the International Committee's activities throughout the world. We trust that this survey will enable the reader to form some idea of the work which has been accomplished by the ICRC, striving constantly to promote human fellowship.
