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PREFACE

In comparison with several previous years, 1958 was relatively calm and not marked by dramatic and eventful upheavals such as, for instance, the Hungarian rising and Suez conflict which laid so heavy a burden on the International Committee towards the end of 1956. The year was not, however, entirely peaceful and a number of events made it necessary for the ICRC to take action. In Indonesia and Cuba, the Middle East and North Africa the military and civilian victims of various conflicts required assistance and the missions carried out by the delegates of the ICRC in this connection enabled lives to be saved and suffering to be alleviated.

Other relief activities were undertaken, especially in behalf of political detainees, and efforts were made to reunite dispersed families; the Central Prisoners of War Agency and the International Tracing Service in Arolsen continued their great work of replying to the hardly unabated flow of requests for information and bringing many enquiries to a successful conclusion.

In the same manner the International Committee has continued its work in the field of theory and doctrine with particular regard to the development of humanitarian law of which for so many years it has been one of the principal protagonists throughout the world.

This report gives an account of these vast and fruitful activities and shows that — even in a reputedly uneventful year — the suffering caused by conflicts of all descriptions has obliged the ICRC to take action repeatedly and that it has never ceased to be faced with heavy responsibilities.

Léopold Boissier
President,
International Committee
of the Red Cross

