

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1975

Each year the International Committee publishes an account of its work during the previous year. But this year, the *Annual Report for 1975* appears in a completely new form: though there are only 71 pages, the layout is different, and there are more illustrations.

The sections are as follows: Operations—Central Tracing Agency—Department of Principles and Law—Relations with Red Cross institutions and National Societies—Relations with international organizations—Information and public relations—Personnel—Finance. In the short, succinctly written chapters, the Report describes the many activities carried on by the ICRC in the five continents. This will give an idea of the wide scope and great diversity of the work performed, the difficulties encountered, the pressing nature of the decisions to be made and the responsibilities to be undertaken by the International Committee, whose President wrote in the foreword:

“...We have to be constantly on our toes and in the year under review conflicts and political tension have not been lacking. Sometimes the ICRC is accused of shrouding its activities in mystery, but its discretion is in the interest of victims. This Report should satisfy anyone who wishes to have an overall idea of what our activities involve.

Every conflict followed by a flood of refugees makes great demands of our Central Tracing Agency. This department of the ICRC plays an essential role wherever there are refugees, dispersed families, messages to be delivered or missing persons to be found. It has a card index containing 50 million entries which bear witness to more than a century of activity.

We are doing more and more to help political detainees; but as our experience in this sector grows, so do the difficulties. Governments do not always provide us with the facilities that we are entitled to expect if we are to work effectively. Nonetheless, the results obtained encourage us to continue even if we cannot be on hand wherever there are political

prisoners. The living conditions of those that we do see frequently improve once we have handed our reports to the detaining authorities who take note of our comments.

The ICRC methodically tries to draw closer to the National Societies and to understand their problems. Through these Societies, it is able to disseminate the principles of humanitarian law and the Geneva Conventions. This is essential, for if these principles are not made known through schools, universities and armies, the Red Cross message will go no further than the limbo of government archives.

The development of humanitarian law is one of our prime concerns. Our high hopes for the third session of the Diplomatic Conference which is to examine the Protocols additional to the 1949 Conventions are justified by the results obtained last year.

In its work, the ICRC has to count on the moral and material support of the international community, governments and the Red Cross Societies. Any new activity raises financial problems and, until they have been solved, until the budget has been covered, the activity hangs in the balance or cannot develop as it should. We hope that current fund-raising will be favourably received so that our activities may continue.”

Several tables at the end of the Report show the financial situation of the ICRC and of the Special Funds which it administers. The Report is published in English, French, German and Spanish and may be obtained from the ICRC, price 12 Swiss francs.
