

Having briefly mentioned the progress accomplished in 1977, I should like to say a few words about the challenge to international humanitarian law constituted by the upsurge in terrorism. Terrorism is characterized by the use of violence against human beings, by acts of violence which strike innocent people, largely indiscriminately.

One of the very objectives of international humanitarian law, however, is to protect human beings from indiscriminate violence, and a careful examination of the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols shows that these treaties are the most coherent and complete set of rules internationally prohibiting acts of terrorism. Whoever commits an act of terrorism in an armed conflict is thereby invariably violating humanitarian law.

As a final remark, I should like to draw your attention to another point which is too often not clearly recognized:

In addition to the specific strengthening of numerous sections of humanitarian law embodied in the two Protocols, the mere fact that the international community put so much effort into reaffirming and developing humanitarian law is a highly significant political event. It is an act of faith in humanitarian law and, through the resulting legal provisions, an act of faith in human dignity which must be safeguarded even in the extreme crisis of war.

The ICRC will always strive to preserve that achievement. In the name of the ICRC, I appeal again today to those States not yet party to the Protocols to ratify or accede to both of them as soon as possible. The ICRC, for its part, will continue to encourage the States to do so, until the Protocols have been universally accepted.

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### **The ICRC's future president joins the Committee**

The members of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), meeting in Assembly on December 3 and 4, 1986, welcomed a new member: Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, future President of the institution.

Last July, Mr. Sommaruga accepted the ICRC's call to take the institution's highest office. On May 1, he will succeed President

Alexandre Hay, who will retire after more than ten years at the head of the ICRC.

Mr. Sommaruga's admission to the ICRC Assembly brings to 21 the number of members of the supreme policy-making body of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga previously held a prominent post in the Federal Administration of Switzerland, that of State Secretary at the Office of External Economic Affairs.

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## **Round Table of Experts in War Surgery**

The ICRC thought that it would be useful to set down its unrivalled experience of war surgery in a manual on the subject which could be used in the training of surgeons from the ICRC itself and from National Societies who go on medical missions.

To this end, Dr. R. Russbach, Dr. D. Dufour and Ms E. Nyffenegger, all of the ICRC Medical Division, held a meeting in Geneva from 11 to 14 September 1986 with five of the leading experts in war surgery today: Brigadier Owen Smith, professor at Cambridge (Great Britain), the Surgeon-in-chief of the Swedish army, Rear Admiral B. Zetterström, Dr. J. Salmela from the Finnish Red Cross, Dr. S. Kroman Jensen from the Danish Red Cross and Dr. F. Stenning, from Australia.

Over these four days, the experts established the broad outlines of the manual, which must cater for the ICRC's specific requirements. They then stated in detail what must go into the separate chapters, exchanged views on the surgical treatment of war casualties, and then indicated certain subjects which the ICRC might examine in greater depth, such as the treatment of infected wounds, which is the major problem in situations where the wounded cannot be rapidly evacuated.

These experts generally agreed with the ICRC's present surgical policy, and they will meet again in July 1987 to finalize the draft of the manual which is intended for use by surgeons and nurses from National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the ICRC and medical personnel from other humanitarian agencies.

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