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PREFACE

On February 23, 1950, addressing the President of the Swiss Confederation and the members of the Parliamentary Commission appointed to decide upon the advisability of ratifying the Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross said:

“ It is the duty of our organization, not only to have complete and up-to-date knowledge on all occasions, but also to be ready to honour to the full every sudden extension, however great, of its obligations. This necessity for us of being always ready, continues. Even though we have at present restricted our field of action, we are intensively occupied with six or seven conflicts, declared or threatening. Greece, Palestine, Kashmir, Indo-China, Indonesia, Malaya, China and other nerve-centres (in Central Europe one need only refer to Berlin) call, not only for relief, but also the most sustained attention. Such tasks, taken with our traditional work, oblige the International Committee to study and find a solution for extraordinary problems, complicated alike in their material and their intellectual aspects.”

The President's words reflect the work of the International Committee during the year 1949.

The present state of international relations compels the Committee to maintain an intermediate position between war mobilization and the peace-time conditions that existed before September 1939; certain reductions in staff and expenses which took place during the year were very far from allowing a return to the earlier level. But the humanitarian services which the Committee rendered impartially to all belligerents have won for it the confidence of the

nations—a fact recognized by the four Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949, today signed by sixty-one States.

This confidence is at the origin of the many-sided activities outlined in the present Report.
