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Autor: Hay, Alexandre

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FOREWORD

For the Red Cross 1981 was the year of the Manila Conference. For the ICRC the International Red Cross Conference gave cause for great hope and it was in fact a definite success.

The ICRC's great hope was that it would get a message across, in official speeches, during debates or in resolutions.

It was a definite success, for we feel our voice was widely heeded. On such matters as respect for the fallen enemy; ICRC activities for the benefit of victims of all kinds of conflicts; refugees; peace; disarmament; and the dissemination of knowledge of humanitarian law, the objectives we had set ourselves were achieved.

However, the ICRC was at the same time encountering in the field difficulties which belied the results it obtained at the Conference. Even in "conventional" international conflicts it ran into grave new problems.

And yet, we would not in the introduction to this Report again raise the cry of alarm which we did in Manila. We would rather stress what has been achieved in 1981 and, while not forgetting violations of humanitarian rules, give a thought to the difference our delegates' visits made for thousands of prisoners of war and political detainees, to the joy of the many families reunited by the Central Tracing Agency, to the relief of innumerable wounded persons tended by our doctors, to the famished who were fed and to the refugees given shelter.

We are mindful also of the smooth co-operation in 1981 with our sister society the League, the National Societies of our movement, the HCR, UNICEF and many other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

We wish, finally, to give an account not only of suffering, disregard of humanitarian rules, failures and opposition, but also of reasons to hope and to believe in mankind.

Alexandre Hay
President of the ICRC

