

Central Tracing Agency

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Geneva Conventions, even if these are not always able to be strictly applied.

The delegate then visited six places of detention, where he spoke individually with some fifty political prisoners. He forwarded his observations to the authorities who agreed to allow the representative of the ICRC to return to Yugoslavia for a new series of visits in 1961.

THE REUNITING OF FAMILIES

Since the end of the last world conflict, the ICRC, as has been frequently stated in previous Annual Reports, has been able to reunite members of the same families dispersed by the war and its aftermath. It has thus been able to return minors to their parents and to help married couples or other members of families to find each other.

This activity has been chiefly carried out in favour of persons of German stock (" Volksdeutsche ") and, in 1960, more than 15,000 adults and minors in this category were able to rejoin their families in various countries of Europe and overseas. The total number of persons who have thus been reunited has reached a figure of over 388,000.

This action is being continued in co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies concerned. In certain cases the Societies carry out the actual work and keep the ICRC informed of the results which have been achieved. In other countries a part of the task is undertaken by the International Committee.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the reuniting of " Volksdeutsche " children from Yugoslavia has been successfully completed under favourable conditions. Unaccompanied minors were able to rejoin near relatives abroad, thanks to the Yugoslav Red Cross and to the co-operation of the authorities of that country.

CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

During the second quarter of 1960, the ICRC informed Governments and National Red Cross Societies that it had decided to redesignate the " Central Prisoners of War Agency ", which no

longer conformed with the new Geneva Conventions, and which was to be known in future as the "Central Tracing Agency". In fact, the Agency, which had been created in 1939, had had to extend its field of action to various categories of war victims, civilian internees, missing and displaced persons, families which had been dispersed, etc.

Since 1945, the Agency has continued to collect and communicate information concerning the military and civilian victims of international or internal conflicts. Its rôle in favour of prisoners of war was confirmed and defined in 1949 by the Third Geneva Convention, whilst the Fourth Convention entrusted the ICRC with the task at the same time of setting up an information agency for civilian persons. When these provisions were put into effect, the ICRC decided to adopt the new designation as from July 1, 1960.

The conflicts and the troubles which have broken out in various parts of the world during the past year had the expected repercussions on the usual activities of the Agency ; more than 50,000 requests for information were registered, requiring the opening of 25,000 searches and the transmitting of one thousand messages. In 31% of cases enquiries achieved positive results. This is a remarkable achievement, if one considers that since the ending of hostilities in 1945, a very considerable number of persons for whom searches have been made, have changed their residence. If there has been a decrease in comparison with previous years in the amount of correspondence which has been received and despatched, the increasing complexity of cases coming to the Agency's notice has greatly extended the field of search. For this reason, 7,000 more enquiries were opened in 1960 than in 1959.

The overall result of these many and varied interventions of the Central Agency, can be considered as being very satisfactory. Furthermore, the Agency's relations with the National Red Cross Societies and with other official and private institutions continue to be marked by an excellent spirit of co-operation.

Tracing service in the Congo

From mid-July the delegates which the ICRC had sent to the former Belgian Congo noted the necessity for establishing a tracing service in Leopoldville. The white population, Belgians for the most

part, officials, settlers and missionaries in their hundreds, had sought refuge in relatively peaceful areas or else had hurriedly crossed the frontier. The Central Agency received an ever-increasing number of requests for information on missing persons, or on persons presumed to be missing, whilst the ICRC in Leopoldville had requests made to it from all directions.

At the beginning of August, the ICRC detached one of its colleagues, Mr. E. L. Jacquet, with a view to his organizing a tracing service on the spot. It was not long before the Central Agency for its part received replies to enquiries which had been opened in every province in the Congo. Breakdowns in the transport and postal services at times slowed down, but did not completely interrupt the exchange of messages between persons who were being sought and their families. After five months of activity and more than a thousand enquiries some 400 requests concerning about 2,000 persons were all to be dealt with by the Leopoldville bureau, of which 96 % showed positive results.

A similar bureau, which had been established at Elisabethville for searches in the province of Katanga was no less satisfactory.

German Section. — The number of persons who have been able to leave various countries in Eastern Europe, in particular Rumania, to rejoin their families in Germany, Austria or in other countries, increased during 1960.

Requests for information relative to the First World War reached an average of twenty each month. These were made chiefly by persons who had reached retiring age and who wished to supply proof that they had served in the army.

The German Section also received frequent requests largely from persons who had left Europe and who wished to obtain certificates of death of parents, testimonials or other certificates. The Service also received requests from all parts of the world for searches connected in particular with German families which had stayed in the USSR, or from families of which one member had been enrolled in the German army.

British Section. — This Section continued throughout 1960 the same activities as it had undertaken the previous year and was

occupied with various searches, some of which went back to the 1914-1918 period. Since a large part of the archives had been destroyed during the bombardments in England, the Agency, in fact, whose documentation relative to the two world wars is complete, possesses information which cannot be obtained elsewhere.

Italian Section. — The number of cases which were dealt with (3,280 in 1959) reached a figure of 5,006 during the past year. This increase can be accounted for by the fact, that the Italian Ministry of Finance transmitted a large number of enquiries concerning members of the Italian armed forces, who had been interned by the Germans and who wished to obtain documents of health whilst in hospital during their captivity.

By the terms of agreements concluded in November, 1960 between the Italian Section and the Italian Ministry of Finance, the latter can make any representations which it sees fit to the appropriate bodies.

Finally it should be noted that the Italian Ministry of Defence and the Inter-ministerial committee in Rome for establishing proofs of decease have continued to make requests to the Italian Section in order to assist them, thanks to the resources of its vast card-index, in identifying combatants, prisoners of war and interned military personnel who had died during the Second World War and in discovering the fate of military personnel presumed to be dead.

Greek Section. — The Greek Section dealt chiefly in 1960 with a fairly considerable number of Greek refugees in various Eastern and Central European countries as a result of the civil war. In co-operation with the Greek Red Cross, the Section has continued its efforts to identify some of the combatants who had been killed during the civil war.

USSR Section. — Direct correspondence has continued to increase in 1960 as well as the number of requests from the USSR on forms or by letter. A greater number of replies were also received from the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, which for its part forwarded an increasing number of questions and requests for searches.

French Section. — This section undertook the same tasks in 1960 as in previous years. It corresponded regularly with the “ Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic ” with a view to obtaining the nominal roll of French nationals who had been captured by the ALN, but these representations led unfortunately to no result.

Polish Section. — The number of cases dealt with did not decrease in comparison with previous years. The Section dealt chiefly with questions concerning compensation for Poles who had been interned in German concentration camps. Since August 1960 this correspondence has noticeably increased. Requests for attestations continued to be received especially from the United States. A fairly large number of cases of persons of whom there had been no news since the war were able to be settled in a satisfactory manner.

Stateless Persons Section. — New possibilities for emigration to the United States because of new legislation passed by Congress, resulted in an increase in activity for this Section in 1960. Furthermore the Agency carried out various enquiries and transmitted 97 family messages. 470 new cases were dealt with and the departure of 238 stateless persons was registered during the year.

Hungarian Section. — This Section continued to deal with the reuniting of families which had been separated following on the events of 1956-1957. This work included the facilitation of the departure of children or adults from Hungary, or else the organization of the return to Hungary of persons who had emigrated.

Other Sections of the Agency which have not been expressly mentioned here have continued to carry out their activities as previously. Generally speaking these include tasks similar to those which have been mentioned above.

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE IN AROlsen

The agreements which were concluded in 1955 by which the ICRC has undertaken the administration of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Arolsen (German Federal Republic) were