

**Zeitschrift:** Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Herausgeber:** International Committee of the Red Cross  
**Band:** - (1961)  
  
**Rubrik:** Central Tracing Agency

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 07.02.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

been their own before the hostilities. The total number of persons who have thus been reunited now exceeds 400,000.

As in previous years, the ICRC has acted in co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies of the countries concerned. Often moreover these accomplish the greatest part of the work; the ICRC is then informed of the results and can restrict itself to intervening with the appropriate authorities to activate the reuniting of families still outstanding.

On the other hand, the ICRC is still dealing in some countries with individual cases of reuniting and itself initiates discussions with the Red Cross Societies of the country of departure.

## **CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY**

Through its Central Tracing Agency (CTA), the ICRC maintains fruitful co-operation with the National Red Cross Societies, the official tracing Bureaux and various international institutions, which assist it in settling "individual cases" which are submitted to it daily.

During the course of 1961, the CTA dealt with 66,348 cases and opened 20,525 enquiries with all these different bodies. In its various sections, the proportion of enquiries leading to positive results has increased unceasingly. Thus, in 1961, about one third of these enquiries led to positive results. This is most encouraging and demonstrates how the National Societies and other institutions co-operate ever more effectively with the ICRC in its work.

The CTA made alterations in 1961 in its organisation with the definite creation of grouped sections.

### **Grouped Sections A**

*(Western and Southern Europe, French-speaking countries of  
Africa and Latin America)*

The number of enquiries addressed in 1961 to these grouped sections was 7,938. About one third of these were connected with tracing military and civilians missing during the Second World War.

**Italy.** — The Ministry of Defence in Rome continues to call on the Agency's services in order to discover the fate of missing Italian military and to attempt to identify combatants killed or dead in captivity whom the information or registrar offices of the adverse Powers had registered incorrectly.

Other institutions in the country asked the CTA for its help. These were, in particular, the Italian Red Cross, the Interministerial Commission for establishing death certificates and the Italian Treasury. The latter submits cases of former interned Italians wishing to obtain medical documents relative to sickness which they had suffered whilst in captivity. Very often the exact names of places in which they had been interned or hospitalised cannot be remembered. The Agency's Italian card-index (capture cards, files made from messages transmitted during the war or based on enquiries submitted at the time by their families) is a precious source of information which directs the Treasury's steps towards tracing the required medical documents in Germany.

**France and Algeria.**—The Ministry of War Veterans in Paris often approaches the CTA in order to discover the fate of French military and prisoners of war who did not return to their homes in 1945. Consultation of the Agency's files sometimes enables the tracing of these missing persons.

As in previous years, the CTA's French section on many occasions asked the Tracing Bureau of the provisional Government of the Algerian Republic in Tunis for information concerning French military personnel believed to be in the hands of the FLN. The GPRA for its part frequently made enquiries of the CTA for news of members of the FLN interned in Algeria or in France. The Agency transmitted these to the French Red Cross or the ICRC delegation in Paris in order to obtain from the French authorities information relative to their detention.

**Congo.**—The situation in the former Belgian Congo obliged an important tracing activity to be continued which the ICRC representatives had undertaken in various parts of the country. In September, a delegate, Mr. G. Olivet, went to the Orientale and Kivu Provinces together with a Congolese colleague to make

enquiries of missing persons. More than one hundred cases needed clarification of which the ICRC delegation in Leopoldville had been made aware for some considerable time.

Mr. G. Olivet's work was shown to be fruitful, especially in Orientale Province where out of 82 enquiries, 57 immediate positive results were obtained. In Kivu, 8 out of 23 cases were cleared up, but conditions for intervening were less favourable in that province, not only because of the distances involved, which are always vast in the Congo, but also because of the general situation which continued to be fairly disturbed in Kivu Province. It was furthermore less easy to find the necessary assistance on the spot. The work was continued, however, and is still continuing at the present moment throughout the whole of the Congo, thanks chiefly to the co-operation of the territories' administrators to whom Mr. G. Olivet had telegraphed enquiries.

Following on the events in Katanga, a fairly large number of persons who had lost some of their relatives addressed themselves to the Agency for the purpose of finding them. These enquiries of which there were more than 500, were transmitted by the Katanga Red Cross whose co-operation was most effective since, by the end of the year, it was possible to give positive replies in nearly 70% of cases.

Since the beginning of the troubles in the Congo in the summer of 1960, the number of enquiries opened by the Central Tracing Agency has reached the figure of 1,150. Most of the enquiries concerned Belgian nationals; but settlers of other nationalities were also involved, as well as Congolese without news of their relatives who were blocked in other regions of this enormous country. Finally, the events in Katanga and especially the setting up of a camp for Baluba refugees at Elisabethville also entailed dealing with a fairly large number of enquiries to which the delegation attempted to reply, in liaison with the United Nations body responsible for the protection of the refugees in Elisabethville.

**India and Portugal.**—In December following on the events in Goa, the CTA received numerous enquiries from Portugal, mostly from the families of military personnel belonging to the garrisons of Goa, Diu and Damao.

Postal communications having been fairly quickly restored between India and Portugal and the internees having been authorised to correspond normally with their families, the Agency limited itself to transmitting family messages of 25 words direct to those concerned. It opened some enquiries to find trace of missing Goanese civilians.

**Spain and Latin America.**—Several hundred enquiries reached the Spanish and Latin American section. Some of these still concerned Spaniards missing since the civil war of 1936-1939 or later after the Second World War, these persons having taken refuge in France, or else emigrated to Latin America or the USSR.

### **Grouped Sections B**

*(Central and South East Europe)*

In 1961 these sections received more than 34,000 enquiries and despatched 31,000 written communications of all descriptions.

It was partly a question of searching through card-indexes and files of the former *Austrian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Rumanian* and *Yugoslav* national sections concerning military and civilians missing during the course of the Second World War. The Agency's specialists were often successful in finding in these archives, consisting of several million card-indexes, information clearing up the fate of persons missing for 15 or 20 years.

In this difficult work the Agency was in constant touch with the archives of "Deutsche Dienststelle West" in Berlin to which it supplied a great deal of information concerning members of the armed forces who had fallen in the war. Thanks to the Agency's card-indexes it was sometimes possible to establish the death of a combatant and thus put an end, after so many years, to the families' uncertainty.

In liaison with the German Red Cross, chiefly with the Tracing Service of Munich, most thorough investigation is made in the card-indexes to find a date of birth, a serial number or an address, which will complete the file of a missing person or enable further enquiries to be made.

In 1945, German prisoners of war in France, having acquired the status of civilian workers, were thus incorporated in local agricultural and industrial manpower. If most of these have returned to their own country, others remained behind. At the request of their families in Germany the Agency often makes contact with them through the prefectures or municipalities and informs them of the enquiry being made about them. It is then for them to decide on the reply to be given.

Since the end of the war in 1945, the CTA has established thousands of "attestations of captivity". In 1961 as many as 414 of these were established. Former prisoners of war were thus able to obtain official assistance or a pension from their authorities.

These sections of the CTA also deal with the reuniting of families<sup>1</sup> about which more than 12,000 communications were received in 1961. "Volksdeutsche" families of German stock, living in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia are authorised to proceed to Austria, Germany and several other countries under certain conditions. The CTA is in touch in this connection with the National Red Cross Societies of these countries to which are transmitted detailed explanations in each case.

**Hungary.**—The Hungarian section has continued to intervene with the Hungarian Red Cross on behalf of persons wishing to rejoin their relations in other countries. These representations were successful in the case of nineteen children and five adults.

In liaison with the International Social Service, the Agency continues to attempt to ensure that certain heads of families established in Europe or in countries overseas pay maintenance to their children who have remained in Hungary. Results were not very numerous. In fact since most of the countries in which these heads of families are living have not acceded to the 1956 International Convention of maintenance obligations, it is not possible to resort to legal measures.

---

<sup>1</sup> See p. 34: Reuniting of families.

### **Grouped Sections C**

*(East and North East Europe, North Asia)*

The chief activity of this group of sections consists in tracing members of families dispersed by the Second World War. The Agency dealt with 22,000 cases of this kind. Most of these concerned Poland, the Baltic States and other regions of the USSR. More often than not it was a question of families of which the men had been incorporated in the belligerent armies and sent to distant theatres of operations, or whose members had lost touch with each other during population transfers.

Fifteen years after the end of the war, enquiries of this type, which concerned the most difficult cases, necessitated long searches. But the successful results obtained have been all the more encouraging.

When searches are successful the reuniting of members of one family has sometimes to be organised, and this is then done through the intermediary of the National Red Cross Societies.

In 1961 the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, as it had done in previous years, requested the Agency to trace many Soviet subjects missing since the Second World War. The Agency then has recourse to the International Tracing Service at Arolsen (Germany) which proceeds to a first checking in its card-indexes before searches are taken any further.

### **Grouped Sections D**

*(North West Europe, North America, English-speaking countries of Africa, Middle East, South and East Asia)*

Several countries in this group only remotely concern the CTA. In Great Britain, the Commonwealth and in the United States, the official Bureaux have themselves published lists of missing of the Second World War.

In Laos, the CTA has communicated to the delegates of the ICRC in Vientiane, and to the Ministry of Public Health in Xieng Khouang, enquiries concerning American and Filipino members of the armed forces missing in that country in the summer and autumn of 1961.

In the Middle East the CTA has attempted to assist Arab and Israeli families to become reunited or to exchange news by means of family message forms. It received more than 2,000 enquiries for this area.

## **THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE**

The work of the International Tracing Service (ITS), in Arolsen (German Federal Republic) runs parallel to that of the Central Tracing Agency, but concerns former deportees and displaced and missing persons in Germany or in territories occupied during the war. The ICRC is responsible for the administration of the ITS by virtue of the agreement signed in Bonn on June 6, 1955, and renewed on May 12, 1960.

Contrary to expectations, the number of applications made to the ITS in 1961 increased. On an average there were more than 40,000 a month, with a total of 128,465 (114,900 in 1960). This increase was due principally to requests for certificates to obtain compensation (78,559 in 1961, 49,029 in 1960). The total also included 27,272 requests for individual enquiries, 8,700 requests for photostat copies, 13,752 requests for death certificates and 182 requests for information of a historical or statistical nature.

The ITS issued 186,311 documents (271,887 in 1960), as follows : 72,204 replies to individual enquiries and requests for photostat copies and death certificates (93,987) ; 113,925 certificates to obtain compensation (177,900), and 182 reports of a historical or statistical nature.

More and more cases were dealt with relative to disability pensions and this is because the ITS possesses considerable documentation on the disability insurance made obligatory for foreign workers in Germany during the war. It is therefore in a position to supply useful information to the social insurance authorities settling these questions.

As in previous years, the archives of the ITS were enriched by numerous documents from various sources concerning deportees, refugees and displaced persons. For example, in 1961 particularly important documentation from the former " International Refugee