

# The International Tracing Service

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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

Organisation (IRO) " was made available to the ITS by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees. The practical value of these documents has been shown to be considerable, but their filing has entailed long and patient work.

## **PREPARATION OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND HELP TO WAR DISABLED**

With a view to possible conflicts, the ICRC must contribute " to the preparation and development of medical personnel and medical equipment, in co-operation with the Red Cross organisations, the Medical Services of the armed forces and other competent authorities ", as stated in the Statutes of the International Red Cross (art. VI, figure 5). This is the task of the Medical Personnel Section.

Unfortunately, even in peace time, most countries suffer from a grave shortage of professional medical personnel. The ICRC encourages the National Red Cross Societies to instruct voluntary medical personnel which, in the event of conflict, would become the auxiliary of the Medical Services of the armed forces.

To this effect, the ICRC remains in as close contact as possible with the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies by means of frequent visits and missions. In 1961, on the occasion of her journey to Australia, the Head of the Medical Personnel Section, Miss A. Pfirter, visited the National Societies or the civil Medical Services and the Medical Services of the armed forces of the following countries : Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, India, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Malaya (Society not yet officially recognised), Australia, New Zealand, Laos, Pakistan.

The ICRC has also frequently sent National Societies documentation on the rights and duties which the Geneva Conventions confer on medical personnel in time of war.

In view of the importance of maintaining contact between the ICRC and the nursing world, the Head of the Medical Personnel Section, participated in the 12th quadrennial Congress of the International Council of Nurses, in April 1961, in Melbourne. More than 2,300 nurses from thirty-three countries took part.