

Zeitschrift: Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross
Herausgeber: International Committee of the Red Cross
Band: - (1968)

Rubrik: Special Services

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: 18.02.2026

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

7. SPECIAL SERVICES

Central Tracing Agency (Geneva)

In the course of 1968, the Agency received 54,783 enquiries and communications of various kinds and despatched a total of 54,227 letters. During the same period, it transmitted 11,390 messages and instituted 13,072 enquiries through National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, ICRC delegations and various official bodies.

In spite of the difficulty involved in dealing with some cases, more than 40% of enquiries carried out were successful.

As in the previous year, the Central Tracing Agency had to contend with many tasks imposed by events in the Middle East, Vietnam and Nigeria. The Agency does not concern itself only with prisoners of war and interned civilians; its function covers also civilians who are not interned but resident in combat zones or occupied territories. More and more frequently in present-day conflicts, the civilian population is the first victim. It is not sufficient to do everything to safeguard civilians and supply the needs of evacuated persons. Humanitarian duty equally demands that families separated by firing lines or frontiers be able to exchange news by means of the special civilian message forms introduced by the ICRC and the utility of which is constantly being proved. Some of these messages are forwarded through the Central Tracing Agency part of whose duty, in many cases, is to fill in the message forms by extracting relevant information from long letters, the originals of which cannot be forwarded.

Apart from its work connected with current conflicts, the Agency still receives many enquiries referring to the Second World War and conflicts which have taken place since 1945. It gives its full attention to these enquiries into the plight of missing military personnel and civilians, requests for certificates of captivity, sickness or death and investigations leading to the reuniting of families.

This shows the undiminished importance of the vast card index system maintained by the Central Tracing Agency on millions of cases, and of which it is the faithful and unique custodian.

International Tracing Service (Arolsen)

In 1968, the International Tracing Service (ITS), under ICRC management, received 142,727 enquiries, about 18,000 less than the previous year. In spite of the 11% reduction, the total is not the lowest of the reported enquiries over the last five years (1968: 142,727; 1967: 160,589; 1966: 155,981; 1965: 129,701; 1964: 197,805).

Requests for certificates for the purpose of obtaining compensations were once again the most numerous items (118,251, i.e. 82.9%). Requests for photocopies amounted to 10,227 (7.2%), individual tracing requests 7,486 (5.2%), applications for death certificates 5,778 (4%) and requests for historical and statistical information 1,478 (0.7%).

After examining all these requests, the ITS sent out, in 1968, 206,469 replies in the form of certificates of captivity, close arrest or death; reports; explanatory letters; or negative replies.

On the basis of various documents, old or new, 624,531 index cards were made out. 602,836 were filed in the central card index system which, by the end of the year, contained some 28 million cards.

Additional documents from concentration camps, the Gestapo, prisons, labour camps, etc., were very numerous. Three quarters of them were provided by the Polish Red Cross, the Auschwitz State Museum and Mr. Wincenty Hein of Krakow. The Public Prosecutors of Frankfurt and Cologne, the Landesentschädigungsamt at Munich, Count Harold Folke de Väring (Sweden), the French Liaison Mission to the ITS and the German Red Cross in Munich also supplied valuable documentary material. Mention should also be made of the Austrian Red Cross in Linz, the International Friendship Association of Neuengamme in Hamburg, the Federal Archives in Koblenz and the Auschwitz State Museum which automatically sent the ITS all documents coming into their possession.

Not only did these documents enable the ITS to resume enquiries into cases which it had been unable to solve; they made it possible to complete the provisional repertory of concentration camps, their outside labour colonies and other places of detention under

SS control in Germany and territory occupied by Germany during the last war.

This provisional repertory, work on which was started in 1967, will be off the press in March 1969. As its name implies, it is not intended to replace the catalogue of concentration camps but will be the first volume of the new edition of that catalogue. The second volume will, in the main, contain a list of Gestapo, army and other prisons under the control of the judiciary. It will also give a detailed description of some concentration camps and their individual characteristics.

This catalogue will be available to the authorities and to persons interested.

Medical Personnel Section

In 1968 the Medical Personnel Section was occupied particularly with the preparation of teams which had been recruited by the ICRC for its operation in Nigeria-Biafra.

All persons sent on mission to that region were instructed on precautions against infection and tropical diseases. Thanks to the obligingness of Swissair, the ICRC reproduced the manual of "Tropical Medicine and Hygiene", issued for air-crews. It supplied a copy to every delegate. This booklet, in French, English and German, describes hygiene and prophylactic measures to be taken in the tropics.

In addition, to protect its personnel as much as possible against infectious diseases, the ICRC arranged as complete a series of vaccinations as possible in co-operation with the World Health Organization and various Swiss health services.

Most of the delegates being called upon to work in the bush, often far from their operating base, the Medical Personnel Section issued each of them with an emergency medical kit.

Missions.—Miss Pfirter, head of the Medical Personnel Section, represented the ICRC at the Assembly of the International Committee of Catholic Nurses (CICIAMS), at Munich in May. She then went to Braunschweig in order to attend the "Tagung der Rotkreuzschwestern" of the German Red Cross in the Federal Repub-

lic of Germany. After these two missions, Miss Pfirter attended the annual meeting in Lugano of the Swiss Nursing Association (ASID).

Visits.—In view of the considerable amount of work to which the Nigeria-Biafra relief action gave rise, and the occupation of the rooms usually used for guests, receptions of group visits had temporarily to be discontinued in June. On the other hand, individual visits of which notice was given took place as usual.

Among the groups which came to ICRC Headquarters during the first part of the year were a party from the school of the Zurich Children's Hospital, trainees at the French Red Cross Training School in Lyon and Marseille, assistant-nurses from the Geneva Hospital, the Sion School of Nursing and the Swiss Red Cross Nursing High School in Lausanne.

Dissemination of the Geneva Conventions among Medical Personnel.—As part of its operation for the wider dissemination of the Geneva Conventions among nursing personnel, the Medical Personnel Section of the ICRC sent an off-print on the rights and obligations of nurses in time of peace to all national nursing associations, members of the International Council of Nurses, the nursing bureaux of National Red Cross Societies and head nurses of Army Medical Services. This document will subsequently appear in a pocket edition.

In the foreword, the ICRC referred the various nursing organizations to the resolution adopted by the 13th International Congress of the International Council of Nurses which took place in Frankfurt in 1965. According to this resolution, embodied in the preamble to the Nurse's Code of Ethic, every nurse should be acquainted with the principles of the Red Cross and the Geneva Conventions.

War Disabled Section

Yemen Arab Republic.—In May 1968, the Ministry of Health of the Yemen Arab Republic asked the ICRC to help the war disabled in that country. Some 150 war disabled required artificial limbs and there was a need to change or repair artificial limbs which had been previously fitted to disabled persons in Cairo at ICRC expense.

Having decided to comply with this request, the ICRC sent a doctor-delegate to Sanaa to examine disabled persons and decide on the best way of providing lasting assistance in this field. On his return, the delegate proposed that a workshop for simple artificial limbs be set up and that two orthopaedic technicians spend 4 to 6 months in Sanaa to train local apprentices.

The ICRC approved: but it proved very difficult to find the orthopaedic technicians. Six National Red Cross Societies to which the ICRC turned were unable to supply them as the local specialists barely sufficed for national requirements. The ICRC was still looking for these technicians at the end of the year. However, the initial project will have to undergo certain modifications.

South Arabia.—The ICRC sent sixty pairs of crutches to Aden for the war disabled.

Nigeria-Biafra.—In November, the Biafran authorities requested the ICRC to arrange transport and admission to hospitals in Europe of a number of seriously wounded war victims in need of special treatment. The ICRC appealed to a number of National Red Cross Societies and to the World Veterans' Federation, in order to seek host countries in Europe.

By the end of the year, the ICRC had received several affirmative replies and made transport arrangements for some of these serious casualties for the beginning of 1969.

Middle East.—The ICRC made inquiries in 1968 in the Middle East in order to find out the number of disabled military and civilians and also to draw up a list of equipment required for artificial limb workshops.

The findings of this investigation reached the ICRC towards the end of the year, but it must still find the necessary funds to provide the disabled with artificial limbs.

Individual Cases.—As in previous years, the Medical Personnel Section received many individual requests either for help to obtain hearing aids and modern artificial limbs, or for information of a medical nature.

The ICRC was able to satisfy a fair number of these requests. Where it was unable to do so it endeavoured to get other relief organizations to take up the case.

Relief Section

SUMMARY OF RELIEF SUPPLIES FORWARDED OR DISTRIBUTED BY THE ICRC IN 1968

<i>Countries</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
<i>Aden</i>	Despatch from Geneva of medical and surgical supplies for the general hospital (including a direct consignment from the Rumanian Red Cross)	52,415.—
<i>Cameroon</i>	Cash remittance for Biafran refugees	10,000.—
<i>West Bank of the Jordan</i>	Despatch from Geneva of milk powder, babyfood, blankets, track suits, new and second-hand clothing. Local purchases of medical supplies Forwarding and distribution to the Sinai population, in co-operation with the Israeli Social Welfare organization: 375 tons of food (rice, flour, lentils, etc.), donated by the Egyptian Red Crescent Distribution of blankets, clothing and games to POWs . .	630,577.— 450,000.— 64,672.—
<i>Greece</i>	59 tons of clothing for men and women, foodstuffs, blankets, footwear, vitamin products, to the Hellenic Red Cross for deportees and their families 6 tons of milk powder	407,500.— 27,000.—
<i>Haiti</i>	Medical supplies and surgical kits sent to the Haitian Red Cross from Geneva	9,850.—
<i>Hungary</i>	Pharmaceutic specialities sent from Geneva to the Hungarian Red Cross, on request	13,085.—
<i>Indonesia</i>	Purchase in Singapore of rice, dried fish, one Land Rover, 2 small lorries, for relief to refugees at Pontianac and Singkawang Direct despatch of medical supplies, foodstuffs, vitamin products (Red Cross Societies of Federal Republic of Germany, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Japan) ¹	152,600.— 147,700.—
<i>Laos</i>	Surgical kits sent from Geneva Plasma, medical supplies, blankets, mosquito netting, foodstuffs, baby garments Local purchase by ICRC delegate for distribution to refugees, in co-operation with Lao Red Cross: straw-matting, mosquito nets, machetes, utensils, etc. and financial contribution to the purchase of 4 reception centres	20,000.— 63,200.— 58,400.—
	carry forward	2,106,999.—

<i>Countries</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
	brought forward	2,106,999.—
<i>Nigeria-Biafra</i>	See " ICRC Relief Operation for Victims of the Nigeria-Biafra War ", p. 54.	
<i>Poland</i>	Special pharmaceutical products sent from Geneva to Polish Red Cross on request	31,848.—
<i>Sudan</i>	Remittance to Sudanese Red Crescent for purchase of food and clothing for displaced persons near Khartoum, Equatoria and Bahr-el-Ghazal	60,000.—
<i>Syria</i>	Clothing, blankets, tents, footwear and foodstuffs for displaced persons near Damascus and Deraa (sent by the Red Cross in Federal Republic of Germany, Switzerland, Luxemburg) (Distribution by Syrian Red Crescent in co-operation with ICRC delegates)	460,500.—
	Local purchases by ICRC delegates: stoves and straw mats	140,000.—
<i>Republic of Vietnam</i>	Plasma, medical supplies including surgical instruments for Saigon and Hue hospitals, sent from Geneva	76,500.—
	Local purchases by ICRC and League delegates of condensed milk	100,000.—
	Local purchases by ICRC delegates: soap, cigarettes, toilet requirements for detainees and internees	18,230.—
	Assistance to orphanages (donation from Mme Claudel) . .	5,500.—
	Parcels for " re-education centres "	9,000.—
<i>Democratic Republic of Vietnam</i>	Mobile field hospital complete with surgical instruments and medical supplies (Red Cross Societies of Ireland, Netherlands, Denmark, Switzerland, Federal Republic of Germany, Belgium, Austria; Belgian and Austrian governments; Oxfam, Christian Aid, World Council of Churches) Transport charges thereon	1,252,572.— 78,742.—
<i>Yemen</i>	Medical supplies, vaccines and surgical instruments for royalist zone sent from Geneva	131,250.—
	Surgical and medical kits, X-Ray films and instruments for Sanaa hospital	47,440.—
	Sent direct by the Red Cross Societies of Lebanon, Bulgaria, Hungary and USSR ¹ estimated at	235,000.—
	Milk and cheese sent to Sanaa by special ICRC aircraft . . .	45,000.—
<i>Sundries</i>	ICRC also worked for the benefit of civilian populations, detainees and internees, who were victims of internal disorders. Relief of this kind was given in 21 countries and amounted to	27,132.—
	Total	4,825,713.—

¹ Direct despatches mentioned in this list are those sent by National Societies in response to an appeal from the ICRC and advised to the ICRC.

NIGERIA-BIAFRA

RELIEF STATISTICS FOR 1968

Nigeria.—From 15 July to 31 December 1968, almost 26,500 tons of relief supplies were distributed on Federal territory.

Biafra.—Between 18 April and 31 December 1968, 6,804 tons of goods were forwarded to Biafra by 719 flights from the island of Fernando Poo. These relief supplies consisted of:

dried fish	2,598 tons
milk powder	1,784 tons
sundries (rice, preserved meat, babyfood, raisins, etc)	641 tons
CSM (Corn, Soya, Milk)	613 tons
salt	221 tons
medical supplies	70 tons
Miscellaneous (soap, vehicles, equipment, clothing, blankets, etc.)	877 tons

On December 31 1968, stocks at Santa Isabel amounted to 3,260 tons.

ICRC RELIEF ACTION FOR VICTIMS OF THE NIGERIA-BIAFRA WAR

List of Donors¹

<i>National Societies and Governments</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
<i>Australia</i>	cash donations	250,377.54
<i>Austria</i>	milk powder, medicaments, Biomalz	123,000.—
	cash donations	43,200.—
<i>Belgium</i>	medicaments, babyfood	151,250.—
<i>Botswana</i>	cash donations (Government)	8,341.90
	carry forward	576,169.44

¹ See note at end of table.

<i>National Societies and Governments</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
	brought forward	576,169.44
<i>Canada</i>	dehydrated potatoes, soups, medicaments, stockfish, sundry foods	4,190,000.—
	cash donations	394,396.65
	cash donations (Government)	241,600.—
<i>Cameroon</i>	cash donations	500.—
<i>Czechoslovakia</i>	milk powder, blankets, medical supplies	181,000.—
<i>Denmark</i>	cash donations	40,221.94
	cash donations (Government)	57,264.—
<i>Ethiopia</i>	cash donations	20,000.—
	cash donations (Government)	215,625.—
<i>Finland</i>	first-aid kits, milk powder, medicaments, meat pre- serves, vehicle	539,460.—
	cash donations	163,881.80
	cash donations (Government)	154,000.—
<i>Germany (Fed. Rep.)</i>	meat preserves, vehicles, foodstuffs, medicaments . .	1,059,000.—
	cash donations	334,910.15
	cash donations (Government)	5,423,825.—
<i>Great Britain</i>	medicaments, first-aid kits, babyfood, soups, vehicles	501,100.—
	cash donations	441,460.—
	cash donations (Government)	511,500.—
<i>Iceland</i>	stockfish, milk, cod liver oil	560,000.—
<i>India</i>	material, medicaments, dressings	5,320.—
<i>Ireland</i>	milk, medicaments, clothing, blankets, meat, salt, dried fish	827,970.—
	cash donations	290,688.45
<i>Italy</i>	medical supplies, foodstuffs	20,000.—
	cash donations	10,397.35
	cash donations (Government)	1,380,290.70
<i>Ivory Coast</i>	cash donations	1,729.—
<i>Jamaica</i>	cash donations	2,179.75
	cash donations (Government)	102,500.—
<i>Japan</i>	milk powder	23,000.—
	cash donations	43,158.—
	carry forward	18,313,147.23

<i>National Societies and Governments</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
	brought forward	18,313,147.23
<i>Kenya</i>	cash donations	468.12
<i>Korea (Rep.)</i>	cash donations	648.—
<i>Liberia</i>	cash donations	108,000.—
<i>Liechtenstein</i>	cash donations	6,000.—
<i>Luxembourg</i>	cash donations	26,820.70
<i>Monaco</i>	cash donations	19,325.20
<i>Netherlands</i>	sheets, babyfood, antibiotics, medicaments, milk, first-aid kits, soap, meat preserves, dressings	1,312,350.—
	cash donations	323,992.60
	cash donations	2,376,000.—
<i>New Zealand</i>	cash donations	13,639.25
<i>Norway</i>	vitamins, cod liver oil, dried fish, milk powder . . .	1,096,000.—
<i>Philippines</i>	cash donations	1,080.—
<i>Poland</i>	blankets, milk	14,000.—
<i>Portugal</i>	cash donations	161.50
<i>Spain</i>	cash donations	1,541.30
<i>South Africa</i>	cash donations	6,458.—
<i>Sweden</i>	medicaments, blankets, sheets, first-aid kits, material, vehicles, babyfood, desinfectant	346,200.—
	cash donations	287,233.98
<i>Switzerland</i>	meat preserves, babyfood, soups, milk powder, cheese	2,918,000.—
	cash donations	835,000.—
	cash donations (Government)	2,437,384.—
<i>Syria</i>	cash donations	1,023.—
<i>Tanzania</i>	cash donations	65,357.64
<i>Turkey</i>	cash donations (Government)	8,640.—
<i>USA</i>	medicaments	360,000.—
	cash donations	259,725.15
	cash donations (Government)	15,552,000.—
<i>Zambia</i>	cash donations	1,479.83
	carry forward	46,691,675.50

<i>Organizations</i>		<i>Sw. Frs.</i>
	brought forward	46,691,675.50
CARE (Cooperative for American Relief Everywhere)	Donations in kind. .	100,000.—
CRS (Catholic Relief Service)	Donations in kind. .	10,640,000.—
	Cash donations . .	21,600.—
FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization)	Donations in kind. .	1,500,000.—
IUCW (International Union for Child Welfare)	cash donations . . .	921,715.91
Magen David Adom	Donations in kind. .	82,000.—
OXFAM (Oxford Committee for Famine Relief)	Donations in kind. .	1,800,000.—
	cash donations . . .	707,524.—
Raedda Barnen	Donations in kind. .	800,000.—
7th Day Adventists	Donations in kind. .	350,000.—
UNICEF (UN International Children's Emergency Fund)	Donations in kind. .	56,000,000.—
	cash donations . . .	474,313.60
WCC (World Council of Churches)	Donations in kind. .	12,040,000.—
	cash donations . . .	681,328.80
<i>Individual donors</i>	cash donations . . .	960,207.50
	Total Sw. Frs.	133,770,365.31

N.B. : This table only takes into account donations actually received in 1968. Contributions connected with the first four-month plan (November-February 1969), but paid in after 31 December 1968, will figure in the Annual Report for 1969. In addition, amongst donations made by Red Cross Societies, inclusion is sometimes made of relief provided by other organizations through those Societies.