

Central Tracing Agency

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of Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) having expressed their intention to extend financial support, and the main obstacles having been overcome, the ICRC proposed to the League of Red Cross Societies that it should take over the operation and, in August 1973, signed, together with the Presidents of the Brazilian Red Cross and of FUNAI, a Statement of Understanding under which the ICRC, promoter of the Amazon assistance programme, considered itself, from that date, relieved of its responsibility for the action. On 1 December 1973, responsibility for the Amazon action was taken over by the League's Relief Section.

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CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

In 1973, the Central Tracing Agency (CTA) received 60,200 requests and miscellaneous communications, concerning action to trace persons missing in conflicts (see below), and sent out 62,000 letters.

These figures alone indicate that its work has continued at a steady rate. During that same period it received 628 lists containing about 132,900 names of prisoners of war, civilian internees and detainees, 31,499 capture cards and 42,757 repatriation cards.

The tasks of the CTA are not restricted to communicating data concerning prisoners of war and civilian internees to their own governments (and to those of their families who send requests for news); it also registers data in its vast card-index in respect of persons missing in the course of a conflict, the places of internment and the state of health and repatriation of prisoners. Reports of death are examined and recorded with special care.

Where information on persons to be traced is lacking or is not sufficiently up-to-date, the CTA sends enquiries to the appropriate offices. In 1973, it opened more than 17,000 enquiries and, as a result of its investigations, closed 13,068 files.

In the Asian sub-continent,¹ the CTA took on a task of considerable magnitude in connection with the captivity and repatriation of Pakistan prisoners of war and civilian internees and with the

¹ For details on the work of the Central Tracing Agency in the Asian sub-continent and the Middle East, see pp. 24 and 13 respectively.

transfer of servicemen and civilians of Bengali origin from Pakistan to Bangladesh and of people leaving Bangladesh for Pakistan.

It also successfully fulfilled its various tasks arising from the Middle East conflict.¹

The new situations arising in 1973 were not the only ones to which the CTA applied its efforts. The many conflicts that have broken out since 1939 and the movements of large numbers of refugees require it to continue carrying out tasks such as the tracing of displaced or missing persons; the issuing of certificates of captivity, sickness or death; and the reuniting of families.

The Central Tracing Agency, which stores in its card-index information on millions of persons, continues to receive requests from all over the world.

Mention should be made of the Agency's close co-operation with National Societies and with the International Tracing Service (Arolsen), which render much valuable assistance, while it depends at the same time upon the investigations carried out by its own local agencies which it has set up in the Asian sub-continent, Middle East, Indo-China and Chile.

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

Founded at the end of the Second World War with the object of gathering in its archives documents concerning the concentration camps and keeping up to date a card-index on former detainees, the International Tracing Service (ITS), which the ICRC has operated since 1955, continued to be very active and received 221,860 enquiries in 1973. This figure exceeded the number received in 1972 by 76,117.

The enquiries referred to the following: requests for incarceration and residence certificates relating to the Compensation Act which came into effect in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953; requests for death certificates, for photocopies, for information with a view to obtaining an annuity or pension, for information for the preparation of books dedicated to the memory of persons who died as a result of being deported; enquiries from record offices, relating to publications, requests submitted by attorneys-general,

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