

The International Tracing Service (ITS)

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in the U.S.A. Departures for other countries were much fewer. This section sent out 10,963 postal items during the year.

Hungarian Section. — After the events in autumn 1956 and all through 1957 this section was faced with a heavy burden of work which mainly consisted of taking a census and registering tens of thousands of refugees and dealing with the transmission of innumerable messages.

As a result, a great many refugees were put in touch with their relatives in Hungary or in other countries. In consequence the work of the Hungarian Section has decreased considerably, but it nevertheless continues to receive 500 to 600 enquiries each month. These enquiries come in most cases from refugees who wish either to be repatriated, to obtain permission for near relatives to join them or to ask to be transferred from one country of asylum to another. Some applications referred to the payment of maintenance by heads of families living abroad in behalf of their children who remained in Hungary. A total of 7,615 postal items was sent out by this section in 1958.

Other Agency sections not referred to here continued their work on a smaller but nevertheless very useful scale. These activities were very similar to those mentioned above.

The Agency continued to receive enquiries in 1958 concerning nationals of various countries enrolled in the French Foreign Legion, whose relatives were without news. Enquiries were opened to obtain news of these men and to inform their families accordingly.

THE INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE (ITS)

Twenty-five million personal cards, over ten million documents, nearly eight hundred thousand individual files of persons for whom the ITS has received at least one enquiry — these figures reveal the magnitude of the work of the International Tracing Service at its headquarters in Arolsen (German Federal Republic). Since June 1955, the ICRC has been entrusted with the administration of this organisation.

The International Commission of which the purpose, according to present agreements, is to maintain the international co-operation established in the domain of the ITS, held four meetings in 1958, at which the representatives of France, Belgium, the German Federal Republic,

Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, the United States and Greece were present. A representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees also attended the meetings; the ICRC was represented by Mr. R. Gallopin, Executive Director and Mr. N. Burckhardt, Director of the ITS.

The work of the ITS continued to increase during the year. As the authorities in the German Federal Republic had fixed April 1, 1958 as the final date for sending in applications for compensation to victims of the national socialist regime, the result was a heavy flow of work and it became necessary to engage further staff. By the end of 1958 the staff of the ITS had reached 255.

In 1958 the ITS received a total of 154,581 applications (203,801 in 1957), which included:

- 39,032 individual enquiries and requests for photostat copies of medical records;
- 84,327 requests for certificates to obtain compensation;
- 31,070 applications for death certificates;
- 152 requests for information of a historical or statistical nature.

Postal items dispatched by the ITS in 1958 amounted to 383,023 (358,842 in 1957) and consisted of:

- 96,120 positive or negative replies to individual enquiries and requests for photostat copies of medical records and death certificates;
- 286,903 certificates or reports concerning requests for documents to obtain compensation, including 34,626 certificates of imprisonment, 39,849 certificates of residence or assigned residence, 67,475 reports on cases of doubtful identity, 144,801 negative replies, 152 reports of a historical or statistical nature.

In 1958 the ITS central card-index was supplemented by the addition of 644,817 cards (343,869 in 1957) and the classification of 478,901 cards (425,979 in 1957). In addition 173,213 cards were classified for other sections.

By the end of the year the ITS Child Research Branch had finished sorting the files of unaccompanied children and had classified those concerning German Children, which were forwarded to the "Kindersuchdienst" (Child Research Service) of the German Red Cross in Hamburg.

The ITS continued to analyse new documents, containing about 44,000 names, made available in 1958, relating to victims of the national socialist regime.

Mention should be made of the very useful card-index received from the General Sikorski Historical Institute in London. It is a numerical card-index used in the Mauthausen concentration camp, which gives precise personal particulars and numerous details concerning the inmates. This card-index made it possible to classify 27,000 names of which about 12% were quite unknown to the ITS.

An ITS mission working in autumn 1958 at the Auschwitz Museum took microfilms of concentration camp documents which, at a first estimate, referred to about 400,000 names. The microfilms will be copied and the documents analysed in order to draw up new lists.

The ITS is now the most important and complete centre of information on persons deported, displaced or missing in Germany and the countries occupied by the German forces during the Second World War.

TRAINING OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND ASSISTANCE TO WAR-DISABLED

The Medical Personnel Section continued in 1958 its widespread and useful activities, which correspond to the primary duties of the Red Cross. The first purpose of this great institution, of which the ICRC is the founder body, was to train in peace time the medical personnel required to care for the wounded and sick in time of war.

The work of this Section therefore consists in carrying out missions and studying questions relating to the preparation of medical personnel. It also maintains relations with international bodies engaged in activities similar to its own and with national nursing associations; a summary of its work is given below: