

# The International Tracing Service (Arolsen)

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Annual report / International Committee of the Red Cross**

Band (Jahr): **- (1971)**

PDF erstellt am: **09.05.2024**

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territories, whether the messages are routed via Geneva or exchanged direct by ICRC delegations in the field. In 1971, there were 83,354 such messages exchanged by the delegations and about 10,000 sent through Geneva.

*South East Asia :* The Central Tracing Agency sent the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam several hundred messages for United States prisoners. Messages addressed to prisoners in the hands of the Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam were forwarded by the Agency through the proper channels.

In 1971, the Central Tracing Agency received, through the ICRC delegation in Saigon, 350 lists comprising the names of 5,918 prisoners in the Republic of Vietnam. The Agency immediately entered this additional information in its Vietnam card index, which by 31 December 1971 consisted of 49,099 index cards.

*Indian sub-continent :* The events which occurred in the Indian sub-continent, followed by the conflict which broke out there in December 1971, greatly increased the work of the Central Tracing Agency, which opened hundreds of enquiries with the National Societies of India and Pakistan. During the second half of 1971, it sent an expert successively to Dacca, New Delhi and Islamabad to advise the Red Cross Societies in the setting up of a national tracing service.

*Africa :* At the beginning of the year, the Central Tracing Agency received a few capture cards completed by Portuguese prisoners in the hands of the authorities in the Republic of Zaire. Some of the messages exchanged between prisoners and their relatives also went through Agency channels.

*Latin America :* The Central Tracing Agency kept up to date its general card index of political detainees in Latin America.

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During 1971, the International Tracing Service (ITS), which has been run by the ICRC since 1955, received 127,872 enquiries (4,543 more than in the year before).

It is worth noting that there was a considerable shift in the number of requests as regards the different categories. For the first time, the

number of requests for incarceration and residence certificates relating to the Compensation Act, which came into effect in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953, was not the largest (48,800). There was a concomitant drop in the number of applications for death certificates (4,747) and documents relating to illness (4,958). On the other hand, requests for information for the preparation of books dedicated to the memory of those deported, requests submitted by record offices and attorneys-general, as well as requests for information with a view to obtaining an income or pension, more than doubled (57,914). There were 8,681 requests to trace persons, 1,315 requests for historical and statistical information and 749 requests for photocopies. The remainder (708) accounted for requests for miscellaneous information.

After scrutinizing all the requests received, the ITS sent out 187,007 replies in 1971. They took the form of incarceration and residence certificates, death certificates issued by the special registry office also situated in Arolsen, documents relating to sickness, reports, affirmative and negative replies, explanatory letters and photocopies. In 1970, the number of replies was 169,106. The increase is accounted for by the additional documents compiled by the ITS which have yielded further information relating to earlier requests.

As regards the establishment of index cards for reference to old documents and those newly acquired, 1,158,591 cards were filed in the central card index in 1971. By the end of the year it contained 36 million index cards.

Lastly, reference should be made to the fact that, as in previous years, a large number of documents from concentration camps, the Gestapo, prisons and other places of detention, as well as documents of a general nature, were acquired.

## Delegation Servicing

In 1971, the Delegation Servicing Section dealt with some 260 offers of services. Ninety candidates were selected, and 43 of them attended the two training courses held at Cartigny (Geneva) from 2 to 6 May and from 17 to 21 October. Two further courses for 48 members of the "International Missions Group" (IMG), conducted by Mr. René de Watteville in Berne, were held from 9 to 11 April and from 9 to 11 November. In addition to the candidates selected by the