

The Tracing of Missing Persons in 1972

This humanitarian work continues unabated, as can be seen from the following details relating to last year :

Central Tracing Agency

During 1972, the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva received 82,587 requests and communications (47,198 in 1971) and sent out 79,296 letters (50,799 in 1971). This considerable increase in the volume of work was due mainly to the conflict in the Asian sub-continent.

The principal tasks of the Central Tracing Agency consist in obtaining from the competent authorities any information available about their captives and about enemy combatants found dead at the front; registering such data in its card index; informing the casualties' governments and families; opening enquiries where information is lacking; ensuring, or helping to ensure, the transmission of messages between prisoners and their families and between civilians separated by the events; issuing certificates of captivity, hospitalization or death, and reuniting families, in co-operation with National Societies.

In 1972, the Central Tracing Agency received 641 lists containing names of prisoners of war, civilian internees or other detainees consisting of a total of 7,788 pages and 196,724 names, 68,720 capture cards and 94 death certificates.

It opened 12,951 enquiries, addressed to National Red Cross Societies, delegations of the ICRC, the International Tracing Service at Arolsen and other competent bodies, and closed 14,810 files,

with a positive result in 7,686 of them. It transmitted 32,106 family messages, but this does not include messages exchanged direct between the ICRC delegations on the spot numbering 49,103 messages in the Middle East and about 1.1 million in the Asian sub-continent. The Central Tracing Agency issued 1,880 certificates of captivity.

In the field, the Central Tracing Agency bureaux in Islamabad, New Delhi and Dacca continued their work. Towards the end of the year, the Agency also sent some of its qualified staff to the Red Cross of the Republic of Vietnam and to the Lao and Khmer Red Cross Societies in order to aid them to set up tracing bureaux in their own country.

* * *

International Tracing Service

In 1972, the International Tracing Service (ITS) at Arolsen, which the ICRC had operated since 1955, received 145,743 inquiries, 17,871 more than in 1971.

There was a marked increase in the number of requests for incarceration and residence certificates (59,403) relating to the Compensation Act which came into effect in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953, and in requests for death certificates (4,948), for photocopies (2,231), for information with a view to obtaining an income or pension (4,305), for tracing persons (10,559) and, above all, for information for the preparation of books dedicated to the memory of those deported (43,991 as against 11,686 in 1971). On the other hand, requests submitted by attorneys-general (11,805 as against 38,133 in 1971) and, to a lesser extent, requests for documents relating to cases of sickness (2,857), inquiries from record offices and publications (3,452), and requests for historical and statistical information (1,176), decreased. The remainder (1,016) were requests for miscellaneous information.

After scrutinizing all the requests received, the ITS sent out 184,907 replies in 1972. They took the form of incarceration and residence certificates, death certificates issued by the special registry

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

office also situated in Arolsen, documents relating to sickness, reports, affirmative and negative replies, explanatory letters and photocopies.

In 1972, as in earlier years, the ITS acquired many more documents from the Koblenz Federal Archives, the Auschwitz State Museum, the Speyer State Archives, the Majdanek State Museum, the Dachau Commemorative Museum, and the Upper Austrian branch of the Austrian Red Cross, at Linz. With substantially increased facilities for supplying information, a large number of incarceration certificates or extracts from documents could thus be provided in response to earlier requests which, for lack of documents, had not been complied with.

Under the heading "Concentration camp documents", more than 10,000 names of detainees, men and women taken to the Auschwitz concentration camp from Warsaw in August and September 1944, were listed. They were a part of the convoys of persons deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp, after the Warsaw uprising. As the ITS had no documents on the subject, this fills an important gap in the concentration camp archives.

The processing of documents on concentration camps and places of detention continued in 1972. The provisional catalogue of concentration camps entitled "*Vorläufiges Verzeichnis der Konzentrationslager und deren Aussenkommandos sowie anderer Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer SS in Deutschland und den deutschbesetzten Gebieten 1933-1945*", published in 1969, can thus be completed. Preparatory work on a list of places of detention also started in 1972.