

## INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

The year 1975 was a twofold anniversary year for the International Tracing Service (ITS). Not only was it the thirtieth year of that unique international Service's existence; it was also the twentieth year of the ICRC's presence in Arolsen. To mark the thirtieth anniversary a short ceremony took place on 6 May in the main hall of the ITS. Each member of the staff was presented with a copy of the booklet published for the occasion.

During those thirty years, the situation appreciably changed. Although at the beginning the Service's main task was to trace people posted as missing during the Second World War and to reunited dispersed families, such work today represents no more than four per cent of all requests and enquiries reaching the Service.

Since its foundation, the ITS has received 4,072,672 requests or enquiries and has issued 5,606,973 replies. The annual average in the course of the 31 years was 131,000 requests and enquiries and 180,000 replies. The difference between the two figures is explained in part by the fact that some replies had to be sent to several organizations, and in part by the acquisition of additional documents which made it possible to give more detailed replies to earlier questions to which replies had previously been inconclusive or in the nature of a *non est inventus*, for want of documentary material.

In 1975 the number of requests and enquiries was unusually high due, as in the two preceding years, mainly to the checking of lists of Jewish people in the Federal Republic of Germany who had lived in Berlin when they were being persecuted. The number of requests has always unpredictably and inexplicably fluctuated. It is in fact the diversity and range of work handled by the ITS which is a characteristic feature of the Service. This can be seen from a glance at the following analysis of documents and information issued by the ITS in 1975:

## INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

certificates of imprisonment . . . . .	26,175
certificates of residence . . . . .	5,386
death certificates . . . . .	3,690
medical certificates . . . . .	2,631
photocopies . . . . .	5,397
work certificates . . . . .	6,191

### Information for:

writings in memory of deportees . . . . .	114,896
records and publications . . . . .	7,565
attorneys general . . . . .	28,952
tracing individuals . . . . .	12,324
historical and statistical purposes . . . . .	1,183
miscellaneous . . . . .	11,169

a total of 225,559 replies to 207,809 questions and requests from 45 countries.

It is surprising that the number of certificates of imprisonment — like certificates of residence which in the main are required for settling queries in claims to compensation — is so high since claims for compensation have been estopped.

The number of index cards issued during the year was 1,918,531. The central record index, the alphabetical repertory and key to the system, now contains 41,600,000 index cards.

In 1975 the ITS again acquired copious documentary material, of which the nature varied as widely as the source and of which the importance for the work of the ITS was capital. Most of this material was of concern to the sections dealing with concentration camp documents, wartime documents and, of course, history. This new material proved to be of inestimable value for victims and their families.

By dint of effort for several years, the ITS has continually increased its documentary material and Arolsen has become the centre for documents relating to the era of the concentration camp, although the documentary material is fragmentary and by no means complete.

It is impossible to name all donors who have contributed to this wealth of documents, but we wish to express to them here the gratitude of the ITS.

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A large part of the documentary material has made it possible to complete the "Repertory of places of detention". The enormous quantity of the documents, however, precluded publication of the repertory in 1975. It has, on the other hand, made it possible to trace many camps, namely

seven of the pre-war period from 1933 to 1939, 73 labour units and eight labour sub-units from wartime concentration camps. In addition, important information — such as the dates of opening and closing of camps — has entailed changes in records relating to ten concentration camps of the pre-war period and to about 600 labour units and sub-units during the war. Less important changes were made in respect of more than a hundred labour units and sub-units. These numerous changes and additional information received made it necessary to carry out a full revision of the provisional edition of the Repertory which should be published some time in 1976.

The newly acquired documents revealed 2,518 deaths which were then communicated to the special registry office for official records. This brought to 264,148 the number of death certificates issued by the ITS as at 31 December 1975. Confirmations of deaths have constantly been coming to light during the last few years. In all, the number of deaths recorded by the special registry office amounted to 354,278.

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