

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE

The annual report of the International Committee of the Red Cross has appeared recently and contains a considerable amount of information on the Institution's activities during 1960.

As in previous years, the report is divided into two parts : practical activities and general activities. Matters relating to the financial position of the ICRC and to the special funds which it administers, form a third section. The practical tasks are grouped under geographical regions and one can see that the action of the ICRC extends to numerous countries and to several continents, thus demonstrating that it is at the disposal of all those who require its aid.

In so far as general activities are concerned, the *Annual Report* describes all that has been done in various spheres. Special mention should be made of references to the implementing and developing of humanitarian law, in which it will be observed that the ICRC has continued its efforts in 1960 to render the texts of the Geneva Conventions universal, of which it is the promoter. Ratification of the four Conventions or accession to these Conventions is now general, and the ICRC has published the commentary on the Second Convention, the last volume in the series, and thus terminating the work to which the International Committee had engaged itself.

An account is also given of the action of the ICRC in the field of information and of its relations with international organizations.

Here are some examples of practical activities which are described : those dealing with the Central Tracing Agency and with the International Tracing Service at Arolsen. Finally, the report includes a table summarizing the principal relief actions which have been carried out in a number of countries in 1960.

CENTRAL TRACING AGENCY

During the second quarter of 1960, the ICRC informed Governments and National Red Cross Societies that it had decided to

redesignate the "Central Prisoners of War Agency", which no longer conformed with the new Geneva Conventions, and which was to be known in future as the "Central Tracing Agency". In fact, the Agency, which had been created in 1939, had had to extend its field of action to various categories of war victims, civilian internees, missing and displaced persons, families which had been dispersed, etc.

Since 1945, the Agency has continued to collect and communicate information concerning the military and civilian victims of international or internal conflicts. Its rôle in favour of prisoners of war was confirmed and defined in 1949 by the Third Geneva Convention, whilst the Fourth Convention entrusted the ICRC with the task at the same time of setting up an information agency for civilian persons. When these provisions were put into effect, the ICRC decided to adopt the new designation as from July 1, 1960.

The conflicts and the troubles which have broken out in various parts of the world during the past year had the expected repercussions on the usual activities of the Agency; more than 50,000 requests for information were registered, requiring the opening of 25,000 searches and the transmitting of one thousand messages. In 31% of cases enquiries achieved positive results. This is a remarkable achievement, if one considers that since the ending of hostilities in 1945, a very considerable number of persons for whom searches have been made, have changed their residence. If there has been a decrease in comparison with previous years in the amount of correspondence which has been received and despatched, the increasing complexity of cases coming to the Agency's notice has greatly extended the field of search. For this reason, 7,000 more enquiries were opened in 1960 than in 1959.

The overall result of these many and varied interventions of the Central Agency, can be considered as being very satisfactory. Furthermore, the Agency's relations with the National Red Cross Societies and with other official and private institutions continue to be marked by an excellent spirit of co-operation.

Tracing service in the Congo

From mid-July the delegates which the ICRC had sent to the former Belgian Congo noted the necessity for establishing a tracing

service in Leopoldville. The white population, Belgians for the most part, officials, settlers and missionaries in their hundreds, had sought refuge in relatively peaceful areas or else had hurriedly crossed the frontier. The Central Agency received an ever-increasing number of requests for information on missing persons, or on persons presumed to be missing, whilst the ICRC in Leopoldville had requests made to it from all directions.

At the beginning of August, the ICRC detached one of its colleagues, Mr. E. L. Jacquet, with a view to his organizing a tracing service on the spot. It was not long before the Central Agency for its part received replies to enquiries which had been opened in every province in the Congo. Breakdowns in the transport and postal services at times slowed down, but did not completely interrupt the exchange of messages between persons who were being sought and their families. After five months of activity and more than a thousand enquiries some 400 requests concerning about 2,000 persons were all to be dealt with by the Leopoldville bureau, of which 96 % showed positive results.

A similar bureau, which had been established at Elisabethville for searches in the province of Katanga was no less satisfactory.

German Section. — The number of persons who have been able to leave various countries in Eastern Europe, in particular Rumania, to rejoin their families in Germany, Austria or in other countries, increased during 1960.

Requests for information relative to the First World War reached an average of twenty each month. These were made chiefly by persons who had reached retiring age and who wished to supply proof that they had served in the army.

The German Section also received frequent requests largely from persons who had left Europe and who wished to obtain certificates of death of parents, testimonials or other certificates. The Service also received requests from all parts of the world for searches connected in particular with German families which had stayed in the USSR, or from families of which one member had been enrolled in the German army.

British Section. — This Section continued throughout 1960 the same activities as it had undertaken the previous year and was

occupied with various searches, some of which went back to the 1914-1918 period. Since a large part of the archives had been destroyed during the bombardments in England, the Agency, in fact, whose documentation relative to the two world wars is complete, possesses information which cannot be obtained elsewhere.

Italian Section. — The number of cases which were dealt with (3,280 in 1959) reached a figure of 5,006 during the past year. This increase can be accounted for by the fact, that the Italian Ministry of Finance transmitted a large number of enquiries concerning members of the Italian armed forces, who had been interned by the Germans and who wished to obtain documents of health whilst in hospital during their captivity.

By the terms of agreements concluded in November 1960 between the Italian Section and the Italian Ministry of Finance, the latter can make any representations which it sees fit to the appropriate bodies.

Finally it should be noted that the Italian Ministry of Defence and the Inter-ministerial committee in Rome for establishing proofs of decease have continued to make requests to the Italian Section in order to assist them, thanks to the resources of its vast card-index, in identifying combatants, prisoners of war and interned military personnel who had died during the Second World War and in discovering the fate of military personnel presumed to be dead.

Greek Section. — The Greek Section dealt chiefly in 1960 with a fairly considerable number of Greek refugees in various Eastern and Central European countries as a result of the civil war. In cooperation with the Greek Red Cross, the Section has continued its efforts to identify some of the combatants who had been killed during the civil war.

USSR Section. — Direct correspondence has continued to increase in 1960 as well as the number of requests from the USSR on forms or by letter. A greater number of replies were also received from the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, which for its part forwarded an increasing number of questions and requests for searches.

French Section. — This section undertook the same tasks in 1960 as in previous years. It corresponded regularly with the “ Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic ” with a view to obtaining the nominal roll of French nationals who had been captured by the ALN, but these representations led unfortunately to no result.

Polish Section. — The number of cases dealt with did not decrease in comparison with previous years. The Section dealt chiefly with questions concerning compensation for Poles who had been interned in German concentration camps. Since August 1960 this correspondence has noticeably increased. Requests for attestations continued to be received especially from the United States. A fairly large number of cases of persons of whom there had been no news since the war were able to be settled in a satisfactory manner.

Stateless Persons Section. — New possibilities for emigration to the United States because of new legislation passed by Congress, resulted in an increase in activity for this Section in 1960. Furthermore the Agency carried out various enquiries and transmitted 97 family messages. 470 new cases were dealt with and the departure of 238 stateless persons was registered during the year.

Hungarian Section. — This Section continued to deal with the reuniting of families which had been separated following on the events of 1956-1957. This work included the facilitation of the departure of children or adults from Hungary, or else the organization of the return to Hungary of persons who had emigrated.

Other Sections of the Agency which have not been expressly mentioned here have continued to carry out their activities as previously. Generally speaking these include tasks similar to those which have been mentioned above.

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE IN AROlsen

The agreements which were concluded in 1955 by which the ICRC has undertaken the administration of the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Arolsen (German Federal Republic) were

extended on May 12, 1960, for a further period of five years¹. In 1960 this Service continued to carry out a considerable amount of work, although the number of cases dealt with decreased slightly.

The number of applications and certificates received by the ITS in 1960 reached the figure of 114,900 (125,871 in 1959), which included :

- 49,029 requests for certificates to obtain compensation ;
- 48,025 individual enquiries and requests for photostat copies of medical records ;
- 17,646 applications for death certificates ;
- 200 requests for information of a historical or statistical nature.

The ITS issued 271,887 documents (320,072 in 1959) including :

- 93,987 positive or negative replies to individual enquiries and requests for photostat copies of medical records and death certificates ;
- 117,900 certificates or reports concerning requests for documents to obtain compensation, including 20,840 certificates of imprisonment, 19,776 certificates of residence, 58,709 temporary reports, 78,385 negative replies and 200 reports of a historical or statistical nature.

It should be noted that, if less applications have been made to the ITS since 1958, there has on the other hand been a continual increase in searches for persons of whom no news is available (1957 : 15% = 27/700 of applications received ; 1958 : 19 % ; 1959 : 26 % and in 1960 : 36 % = 41,260 cases).

In the central card-index, 782,214 new cards were established (719,275 in 1959) and 840,471 classified (725,605 in 1959).

Finally, in 1960, numerous documents were placed at the disposal of the ITS, either in the original or by photostat copies, by the National Red Cross Societies, as well as by the authorities and organizations of various countries.

¹ See Annual Report 1959, p. 39-40 and previous reports.

TRAINING OF MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND ASSISTANCE TO THE WAR-DISABLED

Article VI, para 5 of the statutes of the International Red Cross lies at the basis of all the activities of the Medical Personnel Section of the ICRC. It in fact stipulates that the ICRC, in the event of a conflict, should contribute "to the preparation and development of medical personnel and medical equipment, in co-operation with the Red Cross organizations, the medical services of the armed forces, and other competent authorities."

This section must therefore keep itself informed of all arrangements which have been taken in countries which have had great experience in the recruitment, training and the organization of professional and auxiliary medical personnel. It must also help countries which are in the process of development and which wish to train sufficient numbers of persons capable of serving in the event of war, civil war, internal disturbances or natural disasters. It is obvious that the ICRC should have a thorough knowledge of the situation in these countries, in order to be in a position to adapt the training of this personnel to their own particular case. The International Committee can keep itself informed of their needs and of the help which it can bring them through missions and by taking part in international nursing conferences.

The Medical Personnel Section carried out this programme during 1960. It obtained the necessary information through either the specialized institutions for training medical personnel such as the World Health Organization or through the International Council of Nurses (ICN).

The Head of the section, Miss A. Pfrter, continued throughout 1960 the series of missions which she had undertaken previously. In April, she went to Hungary, where she had discussions with the directors of the Hungarian Red Cross, in connection chiefly with the training of medical personnel.

In May she attended the Thirteenth World Health Assembly in Geneva and the eleventh course organized by the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Miss Pfrter also visited the Advanced School of Nursing of the Swiss Red Cross, where she spoke of

the principles of the Red Cross, the Geneva Conventions and the activities of the ICRC, as well as of the organization of voluntary medical personnel in the event of a conflict.

The Medical Personnel Section kept in close contact with the National Nursing Associations, to which it forwarded requests for information from nurses wishing to work abroad under the exchange scheme organized by the International Council of Nurses. The year was noted furthermore for the large number of visits made by nurses, either individually or in groups, from Europe, America, Asia, Africa and Oceania, who were interested in the activities of the Medical Personnel Section.

Finally, the Section maintained regular contact with the National Red Cross Societies with whom it exchanged documentation.

War Disablement Section. — This section continued in 1960 its action on behalf of the young Italian blind and of those whose eyesight was seriously impaired. Since the beginning of this action, 53 children and youths received treatment ; during the course of the year 7 new patients were treated and operated on in Geneva and four former patients returned to the ophthalmological clinic for checks or for new treatment.

Continuing its relief action for war-disabled Algerian refugees in Morocco, the ICRC despatched 25 pairs of crutches to Rabat, fitted eight persons who had suffered amputation with artificial legs and supplied orthopaedic shoes to 3 disabled persons. Furthermore, the ICRC equipped the artificial limb workshop, which has been recently established at Sarajevo, with machines and special tools for the manufacture of certain types of artificial limbs. It also made a gift of 100 Braille watches to the French Association of the Blind in Paris.

The War Disablement Section also received many other individual requests for relief. Since it was not in a position to comply with these, it has endeavoured to interest other relief organizations, National Red Cross Societies, specialized institutions and social services in the matter.

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SUMMARY TABLE OF RELIEF ACTIONS IN 1960

(classified by countries and categories of persons assisted)

		Value in Sw. Fr.
<i>Algeria</i>	Displaced civilian population	336,500.—
	Persons interned and detained	44,000.—
	Victims of events	9,863.—
<i>Austria</i>	War-disabled	3,838.—
<i>Bulgaria</i>	Civilian population	1,684.—
<i>Cameroon</i>	Civilian population	1,721.—
<i>Chile</i>	Earthquake victims	16,000.—
<i>Congo</i>	Civilian population	138,600.—
<i>Egypt</i>	Detained persons	583.—
<i>Finland</i>	War-blinded	750.—
<i>France</i>	Persons interned and detained	10,323.—
	Civilian population	1,171.—
	War-blinded	6,650.—
<i>Germany</i> <i>(Fed. Rep.)</i> . . .	Refugees and persons repatriated . . .	9,273.—
<i>Greece</i>	Persons interned and detained	12,631.—
	Civilian population	297.—
<i>Hungary</i>	Civilian population	9,219.—
<i>India</i>	Tibetan refugees	13,925.—
<i>Indonesia</i>	Civilian population	9,722.—
<i>Iran</i>	Earthquake victims	5,000.—
<i>Israel</i>	War-disabled	700.—
<i>Italy</i>	Civilian population	3,953.—
	Blind children and young people . . .	9,359.—
<i>Japan</i>	Tidal-wave victims	5,000.—
<i>Laos</i>	Victims of the conflict	14,000.—
<i>Morocco</i>	Earthquake victims (Agadir)	5,051.—
	Algerian war-disabled	4,734.—
<i>Nepal</i>	Tibetan refugees	11,200.—
<i>Poland</i>	Civilian population	21,700.—
	War-disabled	11,025.—
<i>Spain</i>	Detained persons	750.—
<i>Yugoslavia</i> . . .	Artificial limb workshop at Sarajevo .	4,813.—
<i>Miscellaneous</i> . .	Despatch of artificial limbs	3,705.—
	Despatch of medicaments	609.—
	Stateless persons	2,411.—
	Total	730,760.—