

The President of the ICRC received by the Pope

His Holiness Pope Paul VI granted the President of the International Committee a private audience in the Vatican on 12 May 1972.

In the course of the audience, the Holy Father expressed to the President of the ICRC his appreciation of the activities which the ICRC was pursuing and which the Church intended to support to the fullest possible extent.

Mr. Naville referred to the ICRC's tasks in many parts of the world. He described the difficulties which the Red Cross was encountering in its humanitarian action but also recalled the gratifying results of ICRC activities in various countries.

The High Pontiff assured the President of the ICRC of his approval of the work done and said that the neutral character of the ICRC and of the activities of its delegates was universally recognized. There was nothing that could replace the Red Cross, he added, and the effectiveness of its action must be safeguarded.

Following the Hijacking of an Aircraft

On 10 May 1972, the ICRC issued the following press release:

The International Committee of the Red Cross was asked to act on behalf of the passengers and members of the crew of a Boeing of the Sabena air line held hostage by a Palestinian commando at Tel Aviv airport. With the agreement of the Israeli authorities and of the Palestinian commando and solely with the purpose of coming to the aid of innocent persons threatened with death, it agreed to serve as intermediary between the two parties.

The intervention of the Israeli armed forces took its delegates by surprise. The ICRC cannot admit that anyone should use its humanitarian action for military or political ends.

The ICRC therefore firmly rejects both the attempts to manoeuvre it and the accusations that it willingly lent itself to a manoeuvre.

Finally, it once again severely condemns acts of air piracy, the taking of hostages and any other attempts at blackmail that imperil the lives of innocent human beings.

The International Tracing Service in 1971

Under the 1955 Agreements, the duties laid upon the International Tracing Service (ITS), at Arolsen, the management of which was entrusted to the International Committee, were defined.¹

Far from diminishing over the years, the volume of work involved is still very considerable, as will be seen from the information given below :

In 1971, ITS received 127,872 requests, which was 4,543 more than it had received the year before. There was a considerable change in the categories of requests. For the first time, the number of requests for certificates of detention and residence, connected with the law on compensation which in 1953 came into effect in the Federal Republic of Germany, was no longer the largest (48,800 in 1971 as against 71,169 in 1970). There was a corresponding drop in the number of requests for death certificates (4,747 as against 7,173 in 1970) and in the number of requests for documents concerning cases of illness (4,958 as against 6,270 in 1970). On the other hand, the category relating to requests for the preparation of books in memory of victims of deportation, requests submitted by record services, requests from attorneys-general, and requests

¹ See *International Review*, June 1971.