

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.

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for information with a view to obtaining annuities and pensions, amounted to 57,914 units, which was more than double the figure for the preceding year. There were 1,315 requests for statistical and historical information, 749 for photocopies, and 708 sundry requests.

Finally, requests for the tracing of individuals increased considerably, rising from 5,640 in 1970 to 8,681 in 1971. Mr. de Cocatrix, Director of ITS, explained the increase by saying that the positive results achieved all over the world in tracing persons, thanks to the co-operation of numerous organs, particularly National Red Cross Societies, had led relatives to ask for missing persons to be traced so much later.

After considering all the requests received, ITS complied with 187,007 by issuing certificates of detention and residence, death certificates (established by the special registry office at Arolsen), documents relating to cases of sickness, reports, affirmative and negative replies, explanatory letters, and photocopies. In 1970, there were 169,106 replies. The reason was that ITS collected further documents containing supplementary information regarding previous requests.

In 1971, 1,158,591 reference cards concerning old documents and those more recently acquired were placed in the central index, which by the end of the year contained 36 million cards. These would cover an area of 4.5 km by 300 m² and call for a staff of forty-eight.

Lastly, reference should be made to the further acquisition of a large number of documents from concentration camps, the Gestapo, prisons and other places of detention, and general documents.
