

# Special services

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political events. Accompanied by Dr. Francisco J. Martone, President of the Argentine Red Cross, Mr. Jequier visited three prisons in Buenos Aires and the military penitentiary of Magdalena, 72 miles south of the capital. He spoke without witnesses with detainees of his own choosing and, as is customary, handed his reports to the detaining authorities.

## 6. SPECIAL SERVICES

### Central Tracing Agency (Geneva)

This important service of the ICRC remained most active throughout 1963. The Central Agency in fact received 47,500 communications and sent out 50,300 which represents a considerable increase over the previous year (44,000 inwards, 35,000 outwards).

A staff some 40-strong remains attached to this service whose tasks are most diverse.

A large number of cases dealt with still relate to victims of the Second World War. It is by no means easy to find traces of missing military and civilians, to establish, if necessary, proof of their decease or to discover their burial place. One has to undertake and assiduously continue making innumerable enquiries, more often than not based on slender indications and uncertain facts, taking into account the advances and withdrawals of the armed forces involved at the time, the voluntary or enforced migrations of the population and the transfer of prisoners from the camp, more often from one country to another. It is indeed evident that the passage of time merely increases the complexity of these searches, which, however, often succeed in re-establishing contact between persons who have been separated for a long time.

For the past fifteen years or so, the Agency has been issuing *captivity, hospitalization or death certificates* to former prisoners of war, interned civilians and deportees or to their next-of-kin. These documents which enable the holders to regularize their personal status, to obtain compensation, a pension or some other benefit, are often drawn up at the request of National Red Cross Societies, private associations or official bureaux, whose archives have, for some reason or another, been either destroyed or dispersed.

For the year 1963 alone, more than four thousand requests were made to it, not counting several hundred concerning military personnel captured or who died during the First World War.

The Agency, however, has been entrusted with new tasks imposed by events.

For the third time the Agency was temporarily divided into two parts with the setting up of a regional tracing service. After having established a similar service in Cairo in 1956, then in Leopoldville in 1960, it was to set up a provisional bureau in Algiers in September 1963. The special task of this service was to discover the fate of persons missing since March 19, 1962, the day of the cease-fire. Three members of the Agency collected and recorded information obtained by the mobile delegates of the ICRC, which they then forwarded to the Central Tracing Agency. From Geneva reports of enquiries were transmitted to the French authorities <sup>1</sup>.

In connection with the events of Algeria, it should be pointed out that a large number of messages were exchanged, through the intermediary of the Agency, between former harkis and their close relatives, who, by force of circumstances, had either crossed over to France or remained up country in Algeria.

The frontier conflict between Algeria and Morocco, the war in the Yemen, hostilities in Iraq, on the Sino-Indian border and in South-East Asia, in particular, brought a large influx of lists of prisoners, individual notifications of capture, family messages and tracing enquiries to the Central Agency.

Mention should also be made of the opening of several hundred new files concerning compensation to the victims of pseudo-medical experiments in Nazi concentration camps.<sup>2</sup>

To summarize the mail traffic with a few figures only gives an incomplete picture of the extent of normal interventions and the special actions which were characteristic of the Centenary year.

More than 33,000 enquiries for information received in Geneva necessitated the opening of individual enquiries. To these 12,000 replies were given, 40 % of which enabled the positive conclusion

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<sup>1</sup> See pp. 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. pp. 29-31.

of searches. In addition, the Agency received and transmitted 4,000 family messages.

Most of the services continued to record information, either concerning individuals (capture cards, death certificates etc...) or by lists. Of these there were nearly 23,000 during the course of the year <sup>1</sup>.

### **International Tracing Service (Arolsen)**

The International Tracing Service (ITS) at Arolsen (near Kassel, German Federal Republic) continues to be the most important source of documentation concerning the displaced, deported or missing persons since the Second World War, whether in Germany or in countries previously occupied by the German armed forces. The administration of this service was taken over by the ICRC by virtue of the agreements signed in Bonn on June 6, 1955 and renewed on May 12, 1960.

This international service remained extremely active in 1963. Although there was an appreciable decrease in the number of enquiries (in particular those connected with compensation), the ITS still received more than 100,000 of these of all categories.

In the central index, 1,500,000 cards have been classified either alphabetically or numerically (a part of which concerning other sections).

The checking of cases of decease among nationals of the USSR is made by comparing lists of graves. About 28,000 cases have been examined and were able to be completed or rectified against the information collected.

A new edition of the " Catalogue of Camps and Prisons " is being prepared, thanks to the support of many private institutions. This task is carried out by a staff of twenty, working either in a section created for the purpose, or in archives sections dealing with the war or with the post-war period. The principal work in this field is the examination of the ITS archives, which were not available when the first catalogue was published. Results obtained by large numbers of searches surpassed all expectations. These

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<sup>1</sup> Reuniting of families, cf. pp. 33-34.

enabled the establishment of precise dates of the opening and closing of certain camps and their « commandos », and the discovery of work commandos of which there had been no information until then. In the war-time archives fresh information was brought to light about prisons, as well as details of transfers of detainees to certain camps. Documents of a general nature supplied information on administrative measures. Furthermore, a study was made of various publications concerning concentration camps as well as trials relating to war criminals. Several thousand files were opened containing all the information concerning each place mentioned in the catalogue. These files often contain details of several camps of different categories and prisons.

During the year, the ITS received a voluminous collection of original documents. One of these, in particular, was a documentation of the medical treatment of detainees in Dachau concentration camp. The International Tracing Service does not possess such detailed documentary material on any other camp. This includes the individual medical files, concerning more than 6000 detainees. Certain documents with lists and records, kept daily until the end of May 1945, contain more than 195,000 names.

### **Medical personnel section**

Within the programme of the Red Cross Centenary celebrations, the Medical Personnel Section of the ICRC took part in preparing various seminars, study centres and medical exercises for those in charge of corresponding sections of the National Societies.

The Medical Personnel Section was charged with organizing, jointly with the League of Red Cross Societies and the Swiss Red Cross, the “ International Study Centre for leaders of the Red Cross Nursing Services ”. This study centre took place in Lausanne from August 19 to 23, 1963. The programme of work consisted of the following :

- the history and principles of the Red Cross
- the rights and duties of nurses in conformity with the Geneva Conventions

- the dissemination of the Geneva Conventions in schools and nursing associations
- nurses in the framework of Defence, their tasks in case of conflict, internal disturbances and natural disasters
- home-care (report of the 4th International Meeting of Instructors of the League of Red Cross Societies)
- tasks and problems of Red Cross nursing personnel
- medical education.

80 nurses from 30 countries and representing the 5 Continents participated most actively in this Study Centre. They unanimously expressed the wish that such seminars be organized regularly on regional levels.

Several nurses were members of their own National Society's delegation to the Centenary Congress of the International Red Cross, and others took part in Commemoration Day.

Pupils of many nursing schools visited ICRC headquarters and the International Exhibition of the Red Cross, which enabled the Medical Personnel Section to increase the number of its contacts and draw the greater attention of nurses in charge as well as pupil nurses to the rôle and tasks which they would have to assume, by virtue of the Geneva Conventions, in the case of armed conflict.

### **War Disablement Section**

In 1963 no collective action on behalf of the war disabled took place.

As regards individual requests dealing chiefly with the supplying of invalid chairs, light artificial limbs, orthopaedic appliances, hearing aids, the financing of convalescent cures and the communication of medical information, the Section limited itself to furnishing the requisite indications, as far as this was possible, and to forwarding requests to the National Red Cross Society or the specialized organizations concerned.

There appeared to be no decrease in the number of these individual requests.

SUMMARY TABLE OF ICRC RELIEF ACTIONS  
IN 1963

<i>Country</i>	<i>Categories of persons assisted</i>	<i>Value in Swiss francs</i>
<i>Algeria</i> . . . . .	Civilian population . . . . .	136,120
<i>Austria</i> . . . . .	Tubercular cases at Grimmenstein . .	4,000
<i>Congo</i> . . . . . ( <i>Leopoldville</i> )	Civilian population . . . . .	5,000
	Detainees . . . . .	1,000
	Refugees . . . . .	10,000
<i>France</i> . . . . .	Harkis . . . . .	54,686
<i>Greece</i> . . . . .	Detainees . . . . .	298,330
	Civilian population . . . . .	4,600
<i>Hungary</i> . . . . .	Civilian population . . . . .	9,660
<i>India</i> . . . . .	Interned Chinese . . . . .	5,000
	Victims of conflict . . . . .	22,300
<i>Iraq</i> . . . . .	Victims of events . . . . .	36,650
<i>Israel</i> . . . . .	Detainees . . . . .	1,040
<i>Laos</i> . . . . .	Victims of events . . . . .	5,380
<i>Morocco</i> . . . . .	Homeless . . . . .	28,700
<i>Nepal</i> . . . . .	Tibetan refugees . . . . .	263,287
<i>Poland</i> . . . . .	Sick persons, medical supplies . . .	18,560
<i>Yemen, Republ.</i> . .	Victims of conflict . . . . .	147,000
<i>Yemen, Royalist</i> *	Egyptian prisoners of war . . . . .	2,900
	Victims of conflict . . . . .	31,400
<i>Yugoslavia</i> . . .	Homeless, Skopje earthquake . . . .	5,340
<i>Miscellaneous</i> . .	Detainees . . . . .	615
	Civilian population . . . . .	1,325
	TOTAL	1,092,993

\* Expenses of installing the field hospital at Uqhd reached a total of approximately 1,000,000 Sw.frs on December 31, 1963. This included purchase of equipment, installation, vehicles, transport, purchase of medicines and bandaging material, as well as hospital administrative costs in November and December 1963.