THE ACTIVITIES OF THE ITS

The fundamental task of the ITS is to supply, for humanitarian purposes, personal information from its archives which can be useful to the persons directly concerned. This includes answering individual requests for investigation, providing certificates of imprisonment and reports concerning such imprisonment, excerpts from documents concerning detention in concentration or labour camps, residence certificates and reports during and after the war, death certificates, clinical records and medical certificates.

In this connection, the ITS made a major contribution to the activity carried on from 1961 to 1972 by the ICRC and the National Red Cross Societies of Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia on behalf of citizens of these countries who had been subjected to pseudo-medical experiments in hitlerian camps. 1) These experiments were carried out during the Second World War by doctors who used prisoners in the concentration camps for criminal experiments, characterized subsequently as pseudo-medical.

The ITS examined the documents in its possession to determine, in particular: the places where the experiments were carried out, the nature of the experiments, the agency which initiated them, the persons who carried them out, the dates on which they took place, the number of persons who suffered from them, the identity of the victims and the sequela of the experiments.

The principal types of experiment on which the ITS has documentary evidence are the following:

- *Experiments on phlegmons and treatment by sulphamides.*

  Experiments were made regarding the value of a new medicament designed to counteract any infection caused by wounds. In the experiments, wounds were artificially caused and infected with bacteria such as the streptococcus, the gas gangrene germ and the tetanus bacillus. The experimenters also injected pyrogens.

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1) See article on this subject in the January 1973 issue of International Review of the Red Cross.

- *Experiments with incendiary bombs (phosphorus).*

  The purpose was to find the best means of treating burns caused by incendiary bombs. The burns were artificially inflicted on detainees selected for the experiment.

- *Experiments on the effects of sea water.*

  The experiments were designed to ascertain how pilots or shipwrecked persons could survive by drinking sea water. The detainees selected for the experiment were given only sea water to drink, and in certain cases some substances intended to make the water drinkable were added.

- *Experiments with poison.*

  In these experiments, the victims were given food in which poison had been mixed. Experiments were also made with poisoned bullets.

- *Experiments with epidemic hepatitis.*

  The experiments consisted in inoculating healthy detainees with the disease.

- *Experiments on the human body's resistance to various atmospheric pressures.*

  The experiments were carried out in a closed chamber from which air could be expelled, so as to study the reactions and lesions to which pilots ejected from their aircraft at a great altitude were subject.

- *Experiments on the body's resistance to cold.*

  The purpose was to devise the best means of reviving persons exposed to very low temperatures. Detainees were placed in pools filled with icy water or exposed to cold air.

- *Experiments with mustard gas.*

  The experiments were designed to seek the best means of treating wounds caused by this combat gas, which was used for inflicting wounds deliberately on detainees selected for the experiment.

- *Experiments with malaria.*

  These were made by inoculating malaria. In many cases, the same victim was inoculated with malaria several times.

- *Experiments on the regeneration of bone, muscle, nerve tissue and bone transplantation.*

  In these experiments, healthy women detainees had some bone, muscle and nerve tissue removed. A number of these women are permanently maimed or infirm.

- *Sterilization experiments.*

  The purpose was to devise a simple and inexpensive mass sterilization method. The experiments were carried out on men and women by means of X-rays, medicaments, and injections in the genitals.

- *Experiments on exanthemic typhus.*

  These experiments entailed the inoculation of healthy detainees with the disease.

- *Cancer experiments.*

  These were designed to allow examination of the early stages of cancer.

- *Electro-shock experiments.*

  In these experiments, healthy detainees were subjected to a series of electro-shocks.

- *Mescaline experiments.*

  The purpose of the experiments was to ascertain whether mescaline and other drugs could be used in interrogation.

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Abschrift

Der Reichsfuehrer-SS Feld-Kommandostelle,15.Mai 44

Ich ordne hiermit an, dass aerztliche Versuche, welche in Konzentrationslagern durchgefuehrt werden, mit sofortiger Wirkung ausnahmslos meiner persoenlichen Genehmigung unterstehen.

Alle Dienststellen innerhalb der SS und Polizei, welche die Durchfuehrung eines aerztlichen Versuches in einem Konzentrationslager fuer notwendig halten, haben einen entsprechend begruendeten Antrag, aus dem die Fragestellung, der Umfang der anzustellenden Versuche, die Anzahl der benoetigten Haeftlinge sowie die voraussichtliche Dauer des Versuches ersichtlich sein muessen, an den Reichsarzt-SS und Polizei zu leiten.

Der Reichsarzt-SS und Polizei legt mir die Antraege mit einer kritischen fachlichen Stellungnahme des Obersten Klinikers sowie mit einer Stellungnahme von SS-Gruppenfuehrer F e b e und SS-Gruppenfuehrer G l u e c k s vor.

gez. H. H i m m l e r

F.d.R.d.A.

Order by Himmler that all pseudo-medical experiments must be approved by him.

Another major activity of the ITS consists in the analysis and publication of documents in its possession.

As we have seen, the ITS historical section has numerous documents of a general nature, most of them relating to the concentration camps. All these papers are analyzed, classified and utilized. From 1949 to 1951, the ITS published its "Catalogue of camps and prisons in Germany and German-occupied territories, 1939-1945".

Since that time, the ITS has obtained voluminous additional documentation on concentration camps and other places of detention and on various general subjects. As a result of this continuing influx of new material, the "Catalogue of camps and prisons" became outdated and it was necessary to replace it with a new edition. After some years of work, a provisional list of concentration camps and their outside labour units and other places of detention under the authority of the Reichsführer-SS in Germany and German-occupied territories, 1933-1945, was published ("Vorläufiges Verzeichnis der Konzentrationslager und deren Aussekommandos sowie anderer Haftstätten unter dem Reichsführer-SS in Deutschland und deutsch besetzten Gebieten (1933-1945)". This work was finished in 1969.

The latter list too is now out of date. Due to the mass of new documentation and careful research, it has not only been possible to discover new places of detention (6 concentration camps in the early period and 94 labour units) but also to gather other information of the utmost importance, for example the opening and closing dates of many places of detention (10 concentration camps in the early period and 527 labour units). Under these conditions, a complete revision of the provisional list became essential and is now being carried out.

In addition, the historical section has been doing preparatory work for some years on an <u>analytic catalogue of concentration camps</u>. In this catalogue, the subject of concentration camps will be dealt with in a manner never achieved by any publication. Some of the details will be presented in the form of analyses. The first part will set forth the planning, organization and administration of the camps. Other chapters will provide details on their specialized functions, giving particular attention to their regulations and to orders concerning the detention and treatment of detainees.

The catalogue will also have documented indications about a number of special aspects of the camps, such as their classifications on the basis of the severity of detention conditions, the categories of detainees, permission to write letters, work assignments and in addition the manner in which deaths were recorded, taking into account the categories and nationalities of the detainees.

These analysis will be based on all known decrees and regulations, and on various instructions found in the detainees' registration documents. This catalogue will include a geographic classification of all known places of detention, with a summary of historical and statistical data. To avoid confusion, it will also list prisons run by the Ministry of Justice, including some Gestapo headquarters, since experience has shown that prisons were often annexed to such headquarters. Some of the innumerable and invaluable documents will be used in drafting the general section of the analytic catalogue.

Another important part of the activity of the ITS consists in keeping its central card file up to date.

All the names in ITS documents are in this file. In addition to data concerning the individual and sources of information concerning him, each card has a reference to and a summary of documents in which he is mentioned. All requests for information received by the ITS entail consultation of the central file before being distributed to the various sections for study.

The central file is an alphabetic means of reference to all the relevant documents. The classification of cards is both alphabetic and phonetic, providing an empirically developed system, constantly improved with accumulating experience, devised to cope with the varied spelling and derivative forms of family names, especially Slavic and Jewish names of persons in eastern Europe -- constituting about 60% of all the names listed. By resorting to this system, taking into account the variety of tranliterations of Slavic names in Latin languages, it has been possible to obviate difficulties resulting from transformations, changes, spelling errors, etc., in the writing of such names.

The central file now has 39,700,000 cards, concerning nearly 14,000,000 persons.

In addition to the central file, other files have been set up in various sections, in the interest of more effective use of the material.

The central file is continually augmented as new material arrives at the ITS. In 1975, for example, the ITS received from the Central Commission of Inquiry into Hitlerian War Crimes in Poland reports from the dental service in the concentration camp at Auschwitz on the extraction of gold and other precious metal prostheses from the mouths of deceased detainees. These reports contained 170 names and 638 detainee numbers which were entered in the central card file. In the absence of other documents, these can be used as evidence in drawing up death certificates and certificates of incarceration.

Thanks to the constant influx of new documents, which continue to arrive as a result of the fruitful co-operation of such organizations as the Central Commission of Inquiry into Hitlerian War Crimes in Poland, the ITS can continue to carry out its humanitarian task more and more effectively.