

30 YEARS

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

thereof 20 years under the direction of the

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, GENEVA

When founding the International Tracing Service, an institution which is indispensable even today, one has certainly not expected such a long duration of its existence. It might, therefore, be of interest to look back on the past 30 years of activity of the ITS, as well as to become acquainted with the present functions.

In order to revert to the origin of this institution which is unique in the world, one must go back to war-time - 1943 - to London where the Committee on Displaced Populations of the Allied Post-War Requirement Bureau had its seat. The extensive displacement of populations, which was a result of the war and above all of persecution, was observed by this Committee with rising apprehension. It was, therefore, decided to establish National Tracing Bureaux in different countries of Europe after the liberation, with the aim of locating those persons who, in this disastrous time, had been deported or who were missing. The idea was born and put into practice when one year later the allied military authorities were confronted with the problem of registering the civilians living on the territories they had liberated. The SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Forces) gave orders to register all displaced persons on index cards, which became known under the designation "DP-2". These were to serve the purpose of answering tracing inquiries. In spring 1945 the SHAEF established a tracing bureau whose task was to collect nominal lists of persons incarcerated in concentration camps as well as registration cards of displaced persons. The UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) participated decisively in this action by supplying the personnel required to accomplish this task. At the end of June 1945 the UNRRA, together with the SHAEF, was relocated from Versailles to Francfort-on-Main.

At the time the ITS was founded, it could not be foreseen which further tasks it would be confronted. These tasks developed in accordance

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through 20 years of the history of the

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS, GENEVA

When founding the International Tracing Service, an institution which is indispensable even today, one has certainly not expected such a long history of its existence. It might therefore be of interest to look back over the past 20 years of history of the ITS, as well as to become acquainted with the present conditions.

In order to revert to the origin of the institution which is unique in the world, one must go back to September 1947, to London where the Committee on Displaced Populations of the Allied Post-War Reparations Commission had its seat. The extensive displacement of populations, which was a result of the war and above all of persecution, was observed by the Commission with rising apprehension. It was therefore decided to establish National Tracing Services in different countries of Europe after the liberation with the aim of locating those persons who in this class had been forgotten or who were missing. The idea was born and put into practice when one year later the allied military authorities were contacted with the problem of reuniting the families living on the continent they had liberated. The UNRWA (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) gave priority to papers of all displaced persons on most cards, which became known under the designation "D-2". These were to serve the purpose of showing the family members. In spring 1949 the ISTAR established a tracing service whose task was to collect nominal lists of persons incarcerated in concentration camps as well as registers of cards of displaced persons. The UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) participated decisively in this action by giving the government of the Federal Republic of Germany the task. At the end of June 1952 the UNRWA, together with the ISTAR, was relocated from Versailles to Fontainebleau.

After the SHAEF had been dissolved in July 1945, the CDPX (Combined Displaced Persons Executive) established a collecting centre for documents and a Central Tracing Bureau. The UNRRA was entrusted with the direction by the agreement signed on 17th September 1945 by the Allied Control Council for Germany. This agreement constituted the first official step to trace missing persons and can be considered the fundamental guiding principle for the work of the Central Tracing Bureau (CTB) of the UNRRA. The aims were to trace missing military and civilian persons of the countries which were members of the United Nations, to collect and preserve all documents concerning non-Germans and displaced persons in Germany, as well as to assist in reuniting families that had been separated.

At the beginning of January 1946 the Central Tracing Bureau was transferred from Francfort-on-Main - Höchst to North Hesse, i. e. to Arolsen. One can ask why just Arolsen, situated in a rather remote district, was chosen which at that time had not more than about 4.500 inhabitants. The reason was that, in consideration of the zones of occupation, the site of the Tracing Bureau should be a central place. At first Cassel came into question, but as this town had been destroyed up to 80%, it was finally decided to move the Central Tracing Bureau to Arolsen, which had been spared from the war events and where, besides large barracks, a castle and administration buildings were available. The UNRRA, which meanwhile had also been relocated to Arolsen, occupied the castle, and the Central Tracing Bureau moved into the building which later became the town hall.

On 1st July 1947 the CTB (Central Tracing Bureau) was taken over by the PCIRO (Preparatory Commission of the International Refugee Organization) which decided three months later to change the name of the CTB into International Tracing Service - ITS - effective from 1st January 1948.

Until the end of March 1951 the International Tracing Service was under the direction of the International Refugee Organization (IRO). Thereafter it was taken over by the Allied High Commission for Germany (HICOG).

As a result of the abrogation of the occupation statute in the Federal Republic of Germany on 5th May 1955, the Allied High Commission (HICOG) was dissolved. On the basis of the Convention on the Settlement of Matters Arising out of the War and the Occupation (as amended by Schedule IV to the Protocol on the Termination of the Occupation Regime in the Federal Republic of Germany, signed in Paris on 23rd October 1954), the continuance of ITS' activity was assured. The International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva was entrusted with the direction and administration of the International Tracing Service. At the same time an agreement was signed constituting an International Commission for the International Tracing Service.

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After the STABER had been dissolved in July 1945, the CTRX (Com-
 bined Displaced Persons (German) organized a collecting centre for docu-
 ments and a Central Training Bureau. The CTRX was entrusted with the
 direction by the agreement signed on 17th July 1945 by the Allied
 Control Council for Germany. This agreement contained the first official
 step to train German persons and was considered the fundamental guiding
 principle for the work of the Central Training Bureau (CTB) of the UNRWA.
 The main aim was to train missing, injured and civilian persons of the con-
 trol which were members of the German nation, to meet and preserve
 the German's economic and cultural life and to help persons in Germany,
 to assist in training and to help in re-education.

At the beginning of January 1946 the Central Training Bureau was
 transferred from Frankfurt-on-Main to Berlin in West Berlin, i.e. to
 the zone which was under American control. It is rather strange dis-
 crepancy was given which at that time was more than about 4000 inhabi-
 tants. The reason was that in consideration of the zone of occupation, the site
 of the Training Bureau should be a central place. At that time came into
 being the town which had been destroyed up to 80%. It was finally de-
 cided to move the Central Training Bureau to Berlin, which had been
 left from the war events and where there were large parks, a castle
 and other buildings which were suitable. The UNRWA which mean-
 while had been entrusted to Berlin, occupied the castle, and the
 Central Training Bureau moved into the building which later became the
 main hall.

On 1st July 1947 the CTB (Central Training Bureau) was taken over
 by the UNRWA (United Nations Relief for Germany) which decided to change the name of the CTB
 to International Training Service (ITS) effective from 1st January 1948.

Just at the end of March 1948 the International Training Service was
 transferred to the jurisdiction of the Federal Republic of Germany
 and was taken over by the Allied High Commission for Germany.

As a result of the signature of the occupation statute in the Federal
 Republic of Germany on 20th May 1949, the Allied High Commission
 (AHC) was dissolved. On the basis of the Convention on the Settlement
 of Matters Arising out of the War and the Occupation (see numbered by
 Article IV in the Protocol on the Termination of the Occupation Regime
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 the continuance of ITS' activity was assured. The International Committee
 of the Red Cross in Geneva was entrusted with the direction and adminis-
 tration of the International Training Service. At the same time an agreement
 was signed constituting an International Commission for the International
 Training Service.

At the time the ITS was founded it could not be foreseen with which
 further tasks it would be confronted. These tasks developed in accordance

with the demands to be satisfied. It was, therefore, not possible to make definite plans for the future. Whereas the UNRRA dealt mainly with "Displaced Persons", the International Refugee Organization also took care of the refugees who stayed in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Austria in the years between the end of the war and 1951. When the ITS came into possession of the first concentration camp documents, its activities were extended for the former concentration camp inmates of all nationalities.

At first only tracing cases were dealt with, but soon, in 1948, it became necessary to issue Certificates of Incarceration and to furnish proof of deaths that occurred in concentration camps. After the German indemnification law came into force in 1953, the number of applications for certificates increased continually and has remained more or less constant since 1954.

The documentary material acquired by the ITS from 1947 to 1950 was the basis for the present archives. These documents have been supplemented continuously throughout the years. The operation reports of the ITS show that even today the sources are not exhausted and that one can count on the acquisition of new documents in the coming years.

Arolsen, May 6, 1975

A. de Cocatrix
Director

Index cards and nominal lists of concentration camps
concerning Displaced Persons (DPs) after World War II, had been under the care of the mentioned relief organizations in camps, mainly in the area of the present Federal Republic of Germany

Index cards and nominal lists of the UNRRA and ITS concerning Displaced Persons (DPs) after World War II, had been under the care of the mentioned relief organizations in camps, mainly in the area of the present Federal Republic of Germany and in Western Europe

Index cards and nominal lists concerning children who had been separated from their parents or other relatives during the war or immediately after the war

Orders, orders and regulations of the Reichsleiter of Himmler, of the RSHA, of the SS-WVHA and subordinate offices, as well as general correspondence of the concentration camps.

1 RSHA = Reichssicherheitsdienst (then Security Office of the Reich)
2 SS-WVHA = Wirtschaft and Verwaltungsdienst des SS Hauptamtes für Angelegenheiten und Verwaltung der Konzentrationslager

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ities were extended for the former concentration camps inmates of all nations

At first only tracing cases were dealt with, but soon, in 1948, it
became necessary to issue Ombudsman orders to be translated and to furnish
them to Austria that occurred in concentration camps. After the German
reunification law came into force in 1950, the number of applications
for citizenship increased continuously and has reached more or less
about 100,000 in 1954.

The documentary material collected by the ITZ from 1947 to 1950
forms the basis for the present activities. These documents have been sup-
plemented continuously throughout the years. The quarterly reports of
the ITZ show that even today the amount of material is not exhausted and that one
can find as the acquisition of new documents in the coming years.

May 8, 1978

A. de Groot
Director