

THE

## INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

I.T.S.

The tracing of Missing Persons.

## SECTION I.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

## I. BACKGROUND

The circumstances of the war and in particular the persecution of Jews and political opponents undertaken by the Nazi Regime had led, by the end of 1943, to a vast displacement of populations, in the course of which a great number of family members had become separated from one another and had lost touch. Within Germany itself large numbers of persons were unable to maintain contact with the outside world owing to their internment in concentration camps and prisons, and their relatives knew neither where they lived nor where they were being held. Thus, one of the problems considered during the latter part of 1943 by the Committee on Displaced Populations of the Allied Post-War Requirements Bureau in London was the establishment of machinery for tracing missing persons.

Already the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva had set up a massive card index system for the purpose of communications with prisoners-of-war, and to this card index a section had been added for displaced civilians. The working of the central card index of dispersed families was described by the ICRC in a document which came before the Committee on Displaced Populations early in 1944. The importance attached to this subject is indicated by the personal attention given to it by Sir George Rendel who submitted in February 1944 a number of comments to Mr. Hoehler of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) which the latter on reflection believed to be "a few molehills being made into mountains". The representatives of the European