

How to deal with cases

The tasks defined under points IV and V (see page 5) are the responsibility of the secretariat of the tracing service. If its work develops on a large scale, the secretariat can be sub-divided into several sections. As required, this sub-division can be made by geographical sectors, or even according to cases dealt with (military, civilian internees, displaced persons etc...).

The secretariat's task is as follows :

- a) to receive and examine enquiries, to draw up statistics, and then to pass them on to the card-index for the necessary tracing; *
- b) next, to communicate the information obtained from the card-index;
- c) should information be lacking or be considered out of date, to open enquiries with the appropriate bodies (whose reply will also subsequently be transmitted to the enquirer);
- d) to draw up the enquiry card (or complete the previous enquiry card) indicating follow-up action;
- e) to transmit messages.

It should be noted that it is for the secretariat to allot the **enquiry reference number E**, followed by a serial number (see page 13), which will be **put on the enquiry card as well as on the file**. The file containing the enquiry and copies of all communications or enquiries made by the secretariat must be classified in numerical order in the archives of the tracing service. Replies to enquiries must also be inserted in the files with the appropriate references of these files.

* Replies to enquiries will follow the same procedure.

a) examination of the enquiry

Examination of enquiries arriving in the form of long and confused letters slows up the work. The tracing service will therefore find it useful to make available to enquirers (at the branches of the National Society or in post offices) **ad hoc** printed forms for completion. By way of example, see Appendix A, showing an enquiry form concerning a civilian to be traced.

b) communications

Too much emphasis cannot be laid on accuracy in the communication of information. Should the information in one's possession be considered unreliable and the concordance between the information and the enquiry raise doubts because of incomplete facts, one must not fail to formulate reservations in order to draw the enquirer's attention to this.

If the enquiry which has been followed up emanates from a body such as a National Society or the Central Agency in Geneva, all the information collected must be communicated, even if at first sight it seems of little value. Even a fragmentary piece of information could be a valuable link in carrying on tracing and could, by cross-checking, help to throw light on the fate of a missing person.

Should one have to make a large number of communications of the same type, it would be advisable to make use of printed forms comprising the essential headings of the communication.

c) opening enquiries

When addressing requests for enquiries to the appropriate authorities, to the Central Tracing Agency of the ICRC or other tracing offices, the secretariat must take care to **provide precise and complete details** on the person to be traced, and should see that such information is formulated clearly and concisely.

If necessary, the work can be rationalised by using forms printed for cases of a current type. The model shown in Appendix B is

given as an example (form of request for enquiries relative to military personnel reported missing or captured).

When an enquiry is addressed to a civilian, the message form shown in Appendix C. should be used.

Transmission of family messages

Though prisoners of war and civilian internees have the right to exchange mail with their families, this is rarely the case for civilians **not** interned wishing to correspond with their relations who are also **not** interned, but from whom they have been separated as a result of military or political events which have led to a break in postal communications.

It would be inhuman to leave such persons deprived of news of their kith and kin.

National Societies therefore consider it their duty, whenever circumstances permit, to undertake the transmission of family messages, by making use of the form recommended by the ICRC (see Appendix C).

Headings can be translated into the languages used.

The National Society must, if required, have a sufficient number of such forms printed and supply them to its local branches.

Enquirers should fill in message forms at the central or local headquarters of the National Society. Care should be taken that **the text of the message is of a strictly personal and family character, set forth clearly, without allusion to military or political matters, otherwise it is likely that the message will be held by the censors of the sender's or of the addressee's country.**

If, because of current events, the National Society of the country of despatch has no possibility of routing messages to their destinations, it should send them in folders grouped together to the