

## How can a National Society prepare itself to undertake tasks required of a tracing service

When the situation in a country (and in neighbouring countries) is normal, the tasks of a tracing service in the rudimentary state can be undertaken by the secretariat of the National Society's Central Committee. At this stage it is still only a question of following up a small number of tracing enquiries originating from other National Societies, the ICRC Central Tracing Agency, etc...

However, every National Society must anticipate the possibility of a sudden expansion of its tracing service on a large scale.

It should therefore draw up a plan of work and of its organization. It must ensure the availability of adequate premises, and be able to provide equipment, if necessary, not forgetting to be able to count in due course on the services of competent staff.

### **a) premises**

Premises allotted to the tracing service should be sufficiently large to contain the various interdependent sections together. They should in particular lend themselves to the arrangement of records and card-indexes, the latter requiring a fairly considerable amount of space.

Furthermore, the lay-out of these premises should be such as to enable the rapid re-arrangement of one or other of the sections, since in the course of action some may have to be unexpectedly expanded.

## b) equipment

Arrangements have to be made to have sufficient stocks of the following :

- paper for printing of forms for correspondence, messages, lists etc.
- cardboard for covers of files and for cards
- boxes and shelves for card-indexes and records, as well as large supplies of clips for cards and files
- typewriters, office furniture, stationery, filing cabinets etc.
- photocopying machine.

These recommendations might appear superfluous, if one did not remember the difficulties encountered during the Second World War in some tracing services whose work was hampered only by a lack of paper and cardboard.

## c) selection of staff

The tracing service should, at the appropriate moment, in order to **train personnel**, be able to count on the assistance of **specialists** having the following qualifications :

- organizing ability and administrative experience
- knowledge, not only of several foreign languages, but also, if necessary, of various dialects in use locally and in neighbouring countries
- some experience of welfare work.

In addition the tracing service would find it useful to employ

- postal workers with wide experience of the difficulties of filing
- teachers accustomed to revision and correction, through their profession

who would have to be excellent team leaders, capable of training personnel according to requirements, and of ensuring that the work would run smoothly.

