

GRC President Hasselfeldt welcomes extension of Tracing Service work on the Second World War

Still today, the Tracing Service of the German Red Cross (GRC) receives thousands of tracing requests every year from people demanding information about the fate of their relatives – fathers, mothers, siblings who went missing as a result of the Second World War or due to flight and expulsion. The work of the Tracing Service with regard to the Second World War was supposed to be discontinued at the end of 2023. In view of the great interest, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community (BMI) has now decided that it will continue to financially support the GRC Tracing Service in its work related to the Second World War until the end of 2025. “We very much welcome this decision, which is a gesture of humanity,” said GRC President Gerda Hasselfeldt during a press conference in Berlin on 26 August 2020.

The ministry provides around 11 million euros in funding to the GRC Tracing Service every year. Currently, 25 of 98 GRC Tracing Service employees work towards clarifying the fate of missing persons of the Second World War. The Federal Ministry of the Interior is also funding a research project of the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich (IfZ) on the history of the GRC Tracing Service. After the Second World War, countless people were missing. The research project of the Institute of Contemporary History in Munich deals with the history of these people and with the organisation which has made it its task to clarify the fate of missing persons since the end of the war.

“In the GRC Tracing Service we have a reliable partner whose work, which is binding under international law and humanitarian in nature, focuses on the personal need for remembrance and clarification in the service of the common interest. I am pleased that the Federal Ministry of the Interior will extend the financing of the Tracing Service’s activities relating to the Second World War by two years and has commissioned research into the history of the Tracing Service by a renowned institute,” declared Dr. Markus Kerber, State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community, on the occasion of the International Day of Missing Persons on 30 August.

In the past year alone, the GRC Tracing Service received a total of 10,091 requests regarding missing persons from the Second World War. “Interest in the fate of their relatives who went missing during the war or due to expulsion remains unabated in many families. After decades of uncertainty, the information provided by the GRC Tracing Service brings clarity to many about what has happened to their relatives,” says GRC President Gerda Hasselfeldt.

Professor Dr. Magnus Brechtken, Deputy Director of the IfZ, points out that the GRC Tracing Service took on an important task for millions of Germans after 1945: “Within our scientific research, we therefore shed light on the special contribution of the GRC Tracing Service – also thanks to its international networking – in the individual coping with the consequences of war in Germany.”

More information under: www.drk-suchdienst.de, www.bmi.bund.de, and www.ifz-muenchen.de.