

Digitisation of Correspondence Underway

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Press release from: [International Tracing Service \(ITS\)](#)



The International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen has commenced work on the most elaborate sub-project involved in the digitalisation of its case correspondence. Around three million files of correspondence between the tracing service, public authorities and the victims of national socialist persecution as well as their family members are to be digitised over the next few years. “Together with the original documents from the Nazi era, the correspondence cases offer a concise account of individual fates,” said Udo Jost, Head of the Archive Division at ITS. “They take the puzzle pieces from the documents, which are often only fragmentary, and assemble them to an overall picture.”

The correspondence files comprise enquiries, letters and witness reports from survivors of nazi persecution or from their family members. “Especially the correspondence from the immediate post-war period explains the different experiences from a very personal point of view,” said Jost. People turned to the tracing service to gain information on the existing documents or search for surviving family members. In many cases, they also required certificates for compensation and pension applications. “Around three million cases thus accumulated over the course of six decades. Each correspondence file holds an average of 20 pages,” explained Alexander Lommel, Head of the Digitisation Division.

Up until now, the International Tracing Service has digitised around 84.5 million images and roughly 6.5 terabytes of data including documents on concentration camps, ghettos and prisons (ca. 18 million images), the ITS central name index (ca. 42 million images), registration cards of displaced persons (ca. 7 million images), documents concerning forced labour (ca. 13 million images), and files from DP camps and emigration after World War II (ca. 4.5 million images). Of the original documents still in need of digitisation are the files from the children’s tracing service as well as the so-called general documents.

“We will respect the protection of personal data when releasing any correspondence cases,” promised Jost. “Enquiries that are less than 25 years old are only open to the victims themselves and their next of kin – not to researchers.” The digitisation of the correspondence files - referred to as T/D cases (tracing/documents, search/documents) - is done at eleven scanning workstations. It will take the ITS a few years to complete the entire project.

About the International Tracing Service

The International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolsen serves the victims of Nazi persecution and their families by documenting their fate with the help of the archives it manages. ITS preserves these historic records and makes them available for research.

ITS is presided over by the eleven states of its International Commission (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, The Netherlands, Poland, Great Britain, USA). Its legal basis is stipulated by the Bonn Agreements of 1955 and the amendment protocol from 2006. By order of the commission, ITS is directed by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Further information on the International Tracing Service can be found on the web at www.its-arolsen.org.

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[You can find this press release here](#)