

“A unique memorial site to the victims of a horrendous past”



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To be here in Bad Arolsen has a very special meaning for me. Recorded among these vast document files are the way stations of my father's suffering during the Holocaust: the Ghetto of Kielce, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and, finally, Buchenwald, where he died in January 1945, four months before the end of the War. This is my father's only memorial. There are no others, not even a marked grave with his remains in a cemetery, where my family – my wife and I, our children, grandchildren and their descendants – would be able to express our love and respect for a man who had to die for no reason other than that a murderous regime decreed that he had no right to live.

My father is just one such victim among many millions, Jews and non-Jews alike, who shared his fate, including my maternal grandparents who died in Treblinka and many other close relatives. They also have no marked graves and no memorials other than the files housed here in Bad Arolsen. For them, as for my father, these files are the resting place of their unfulfilled lives, dreams and hopes. All of them murdered because they were born with a religion, race, ethnic identity or sexual orientation that the Nazis decided had to be eliminated.

Recorded here, too, is my mother's post-war search for me after her liberation from Ravensbrück. We were separated in Auschwitz in 1944 and were not reunited until December 1946 in Göttingen, her birthplace. By then, I had survived the infamous January 1945 Death March out of Auschwitz only to find myself in the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. Liberated by Soviet and Polish troops in April 1945, I became the mascot of the First Polish Kosciuszko Division, and “took part with it”, so to speak, in the battle of Berlin. After the division returned to Poland, I was placed in a Jewish



*Picture: Child survivors after the liberation of the concentration camp Auschwitz.*

orphanage near Warsaw. There I remained until my mother found me. Many documents detailing her search for me can be found here in Bad Arolsen. She believed that I was alive, even though many of her friends told her that I could not possibly have survived – few children did – but she persisted. Similar stories abound in these files, some happy, many others not. Here I think in particular of the many mothers whose children were not as lucky as I.

What we have here in Bad Arolsen then is a sacred remembrance site for the victims of the Holocaust and of other Nazi atrocities. These files also tell the story of the suffering of those who survived these killing fields. While for some these files contain documents that have only academic and historical value, for us, the survivors and the relatives of the victims, they are a vast and unique memorial site to the victims of a horrendous past. That is why these documents are so precious to us. Here is our hallowed ground.

These documents must be preserved and protected forever to allow the world to remember and to honor the victims of the terrible crimes that the Nazi regime committed. They must also be maintained and made widely accessible to remind the peoples of the world of their obligation to guard against leaders who would lead them to commit similar crimes.

Were it not for the documents in these files, successive generations might find it impossible to imagine, let alone believe, that these horrendous crimes were in fact committed, and on such a massive

scale. The human mind is simply not able to grasp this terrible truth: a nation transformed into a killing machine programmed to destroy millions of innocent human beings for no reason other than that they were different. These files tell the story, not only in terms of the numbers of the victims; they are also a testament to the suffering of each individual human being who perished on the orders of the Nazi regime. They also tell the story of the suffering to which all of us who survived were subjected.

**I. T. S.**  
CHILD SEARCH

**CASE COVER SHEET**

Surname: *Abrahamowitz*

Given or children names: *Yehuda, Chana, Benjamin*

Other names used: *Miriam*

Nationality: *Polish - Jew*

Birth date: *9/8/48*

Birthplace: *Lodz, Poland*

Missing child: *M*

Located child:

Registered child:

Relatives located:

Checked with children's index: *YES*

Card entered into index: *YES*

Date case received: *12.8.49*


Action of Correspondence unit:

Action of Correspondence unit	Date sent out	Initials
<i>Letter to CIA Search Class Unit</i>	<i>28.8.49</i>	<i>V.L.S.</i>
<i>Letter to ITC, D.C.I. Office</i>	<i>19.7.50</i>	<i>///</i>
<i>Letter to JAFF Tel Aviv</i>	<i>30.3.50</i>	<i>M.H.S.</i>

**Foto-Israel**

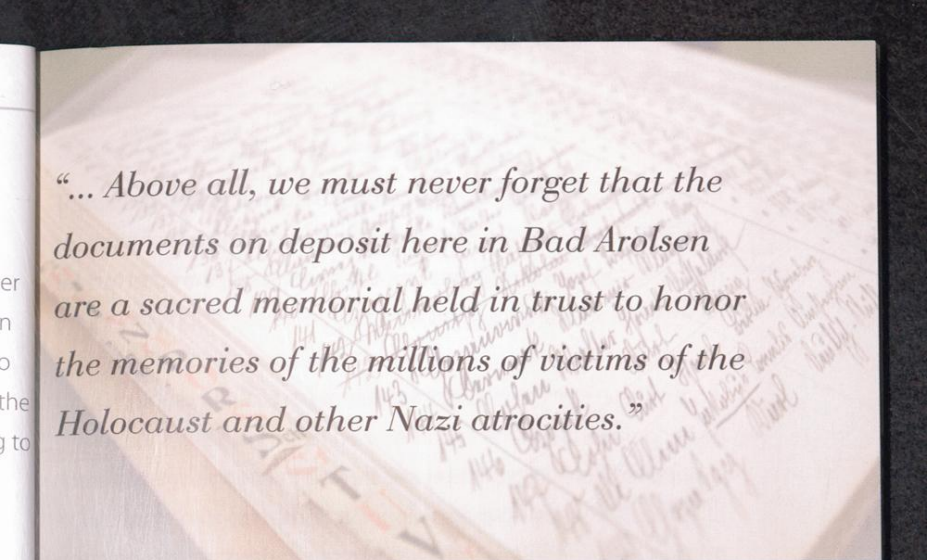
*Mikrofilm 12*

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That is why I am almost tempted to express my gratitude to the faceless scribes who had to maintain these files and to the policy-makers of the regime who ordered them to be compiled. After all, without realizing it, they preserved the evidence that these heinous crimes were in fact committed. Of course, that was not the Nazi regime's intention; its purpose was proper bookkeeping, heartless in its orderliness and precision: after all, "Ordnung muss sein". That urge, that insane urge to maintain order trumped all other considerations. Here then, for all to see is proof, if one were needed, of the depravity of its leaders and the regime's willing executioners.

Let us not forget, however, that these files tell us only a part of the story. They do not speak and cannot speak of the irreplaceable loss humankind as a whole suffered, with the murder of millions of children, for example, before the world was ever able to benefit from their unique talents! We will therefore never know how many



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of these children, had they lived, would have earned a variety of Nobel Prizes, or how many among them might have become great poets and writers, actors, painters, scholars, musicians, architects, engineers, surgeons, scientists, and master craftsmen, each making ours a better, more knowing and more beautiful world. What we do know is that they were murdered by killers intoxicated by an inhuman ideology; killers who sprang from one of the most civilized nations of the world, a country which, as a result, also suffered the same cultural losses as the rest of the world. We will never be able to fully assess the magnitude of these losses, nor the losses that today's democratic Germany is still burdened with because of those horrendous crimes.

For the victims of the Holocaust and their descendants and for the descendants of the non-Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities, these files will forever remain sacred family memorials. Here they will be able to recover the missing strands of their family histories and roots. And here too they will finally have access to the information that until recently they were for decades not able or allowed to see – an injustice that has yet to be fully accounted for and that must not be repeated.

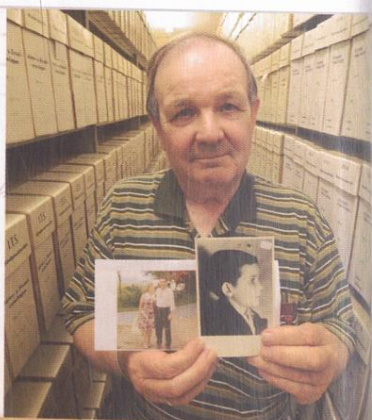
For teachers, scholars, and researchers of many different disciplines, the Bad Arolsen documents can now become an inexhaustible laboratory and historical archive. Here they might be able to gain insights into the causes of this tragic period and seek to understand the mentality of those “ordinary Germans” who executed the Nazi regime's extermination policies. Of interest as well might be the beliefs and convictions of those Germans who, at the risk of their own lives, opposed those policies and tried to save the lives of the intended victims. I saw some of these courageous Germans

in Sachsenhausen, and I still remember that I was told at the time that many among them were Catholic priests, ministers of other religious denominations, and Jehovah's witnesses. They seemed to be treated more brutally than we.

It is my hope that scholars from different parts of the world will be encouraged to come to Bad Arolsen to study the files that are maintained here and that they will be free to engage in research of particular interest to them. I consider it important that special support be given to research that seeks to understand why some individuals never lost their moral compass in the midst of the Holocaust and other atrocities, while others – the Kapos in Auschwitz for example – became willing collaborators and even willing killers. We need that type of research if we are ever to succeed in the struggle to prevent future Holocausts, future genocides.



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mation for survivors, family  
members, historians and the  
interested public.



This question is not one merely for psychiatrists and psychologists to explore. It requires collaborative research efforts by scholars trained in various disciplines and working in different parts of the world. I hope, therefore, that the ITS' new administration will facilitate and encourage such studies and that German and foreign funding agencies will provide support for them.

It is also very important for the ITS to continue and further develop educational programs and curricular materials to be used in primary and secondary schools. The earlier we acquaint children of different ages with the existence of these files and their contents, the easier it will be to teach the history of the Holocaust and others mass killings. Every new generation of children must be familiarized with this terrible past and its horrendous consequences. Case studies drawn from these files would be particularly effective teaching aids. In this effort, the victims must have names, they must be seen to have been human beings and not just numbers – six million for example – which unintentionally dehumanizes those who were murdered.

Also not to be forgotten are yet another type of documents housed here in Bad Arolsen. These are files that were compiled a few years after the Second World War. They constitute yet another historical treasure trove which contains important information about the lives of vast numbers of Displaced Persons, including Holocaust survivors, slave laborers, former prisoners of war and political refugees from the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. Many of these DPs, as we used to call them, eventually emigrated to Israel, the United States, Australia and Canada, among other countries. Others stayed in Germany or moved to nearby European countries. What we have here is a documentary history of a mass migration or population transfer, a "Völkerwanderung" of immense proportions that remains to be fully studied and understood.

Scholars in countries where these immigrants eventually settled have studied the manner in which they were integrated into their new homelands. But the authors of these studies were not always able to draw on the personal histories and camp experiences of these immigrants; they were either not aware of the existence of this information or were given to understand that they would not be allowed to view these files. That information will now be accessible to them here in Bad Arolsen.

In thinking of these files, I have often wondered what character traits, in addition to sheer luck, enabled many DPs to survive the Holocaust, for example, and what if any impact those character traits may have had on their ability to make new and frequently successful lives for themselves in their adopted homelands. In that connection, it may well be asked whether similar studies might not also be of use to various countries that today face an influx of ever larger numbers of immigrants. Politicians in these countries frequently focus on alleged negative consequences of immigration, while paying little attention to the beneficial economic and social impact of immigration.

Speaking of research, it would probably make sense for the ITS to establish one or more advisory councils to assist the new director and her staff to develop, encourage and support research and educational programs drawing on the information found in the Bad Arolsen files. It would also make sense for the director to convene meetings from time to time with representatives of major Holocaust and related centers in order to explore and develop new programs or ideas for the better utilization of ITS files. Bad Arolsen might in time even become a clearing house or information center for such activities.



Above all, we must never forget that the documents on deposit here in Bad Arolsen are a sacred memorial held in trust to honor the memories of the millions of victims of the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities. These documents are also here to remind the world of the horrendous crimes the Nazi regime perpetrated, not in order to encourage hatred against today's Germany, which deserves admiration for its transformation from a killer nation into a truly democratic country, but above all, as a perpetual reminder of the obligation that we and all future generations have to ensure that this terrible past is never repeated.

Permit me, finally, to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross for its long stewardship of these documents. I would also like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Blondel, for discharging your position as director of the ITS with understanding and empathy for those of us who wanted to learn more about the fate of our loved ones. Let me also congratulate you, Professor Boehling, on your appointment as director of the new ITS. I wish you much satisfaction and success in this important position. It is my profound hope that the relationship between the Federal Archive and the ITS will be mutually supportive, most fruitful and cordial in protecting the sacred character of the Bad Arolsen documents.

