

The events of the war which were spreading 50 years ago threatened to unhinge the world.

Without waiting for the end of the fighting, the Headquarters of the Allied Forces established a Central Tracing Bureau already in 1943. At that time, it was already obvious that the civilian population that had undergone so much suffering would still be in need of international help after the war. In this connection, the assistance in the search for missing relatives and the confirmation of the persecution suffered were the most important matters.

Still today, far more than 100,000 inquiries of this kind arrive at the International Tracing Service (ITS) each year. For the years to come, starting in 1993, more than 300,000 inquiries are to be expected from the CIS alone.

A proof that the humanitarian mandate assigned to the ITS is still a matter of topical interest!

Only the careful evaluation of the approximately 20,000 linear metres of personal documents preserved in Arolsen enables the victims of the National Socialist Regime and their direct relatives to enforce their rights.

In accordance with its mandate, the ITS takes care of civilians who were incarcerated or sent into forced labour because of their race, religion, ethnic origin, creed or political leanings and who stayed in DP-camps (DP = displaced person) directly after the war.

The agreements determine that information is only issued to the persecutees themselves, their assigns and the compensation and pension authorities. If possible, the ITS tries to confirm the complete persecution of a victim: From the day of arrest respectively deportation via the forced labour and/or stay in prisons or concentration camps up to the stay in DP-camps. In addition, the relatives are informed about the last trace as, for example, death, liberation or emigration.

The fact that in many countries the confirmed duration of the imprisonment or forced labour is decisive for the calculation of the amount of pensions inevitably requires as complete replies as possible. Numerous new funds, however, justify a deviation from this procedure, because in these cases only the proof of the persecution is asked for and not its duration.

Since its establishment, the ITS has sent out more than 7 million replies. The original task to help the former persecutees as fast and as completely as possible also remains the aim of the ITS for the 1990s.

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