

## The tasks of the International Tracing Service

In the Bonn Agreements, these are described as follows:  
The ITS in Arolsen was established in order to trace missing persons and

- to assemble
- to classify
- to preserve
- and to evaluate

the records concerning Germans and non-Germans who were incarcerated in National Socialist concentration or labour camps or concerning non-Germans who were displaced owing to the Second World War.

In plain language this means that the ITS issues, upon individual written request, certificates about the wartime and post-war stay up to the emigration **exclusively to civilians** who were incarcerated or sent into forced labour during the National Socialist period because of their race, religion, ethnic origin, creed or political leanings.

This is done on the basis of the evaluation of the documentary material on hand in Arolsen, at the moment more than 19,000 linear metres lined up edgewise sheet to sheet, in the form of

- Excerpts from Documents or
- reports.

If a check of the available stocks does not lead to the desired result, the ITS makes check-back inquiries at third offices in order to obtain the evidence which is so important for the inquirer.

Since the personal records preserved in Arolsen are subject to the regulations of the Bonn Agreements, the ITS issues its information only to the former persecutees themselves, their assigns respectively the compensation or pension authorities. Third parties are only entitled to be issued information if they submit a written authorization.

The certificates issued by the ITS under the emblem of the Red Cross are recognized without attestation by a lawyer all over the world and thus they are an important piece of evidence for the persons concerned in order to assert their claims for a pension or indemnification.

As the name International **Tracing Service** already indicates, the ITS also deals, in accordance with its mandate, with the search for persons. However, it is only the competent office if persons are concerned who were separated or lost contact during the Second World War.

This category of inquiries represented the main part of requests during the initial stage of the International Tracing Service whereas, today, it only amounts to a small percentage – although an increasing number of tracing inquiries has again been coming in due to the political reorganization in Europe.

As the gap between the events of that time and the present widens, the tracing work is becoming more difficult and, for this reason, today's successes are all the more significant.

They serve as incentive not to leave anything undone even in the future in order to clarify individual fates, for example, to reunite children and their parents, brothers and sisters who were torn apart during the war, etc.

# Incoming and outgoing mail from 1987 to 1992

