

Implementation of the Mandates Assigned to the International Tracing Service so far

Since the middle of the 1990s, the ITS has been planning and realizing the change from paper archives into electronic archives. Upon conclusion of the work, as many activities within the scope of the completion of the mandate as possible are supposed to run by means of information technology. As individual steps cannot always be described briefly and concisely, the following expositions partly use representations in the form of illustrations.

The Mandate of Assembling

The name "Assembling" refers to any receipt of personal records that document a proof about the persecution suffered, i.e. the life of hardship of a person concerned. The ITS also uses the term "Document Acquisition" for this. An expression that is not quite correct, since, from the very beginning, funds have never been available for purchasing such records. The more individual pieces of evidence the ITS has at its disposal, the more of the desired confirmations may be issued. The large amount of documents on hand today is a reflection of the success of the endeavours over decades. It is also a proof of the excellent cooperation with a large number of third offices that have decided to actively support the humanitarian work in Arolsen.

The presumably most convincing reason for letting the ITS have valuable material – in the original or as copies – gratuitously is probably the fact that the ITS issues its confirmations to the inquirers free of any charge as well.

The document acquisition may be subdivided, from the point of view of the ITS, into three completely different variants:

- The registration of non-German persons in the territories, liberated little by little, still during the war and in the years afterwards by the employees of all the different organizations that had, over the years, assumed responsibility for the Tracing Service, established especially in the interest of the civilian persecutees in 1943.
- The transfer of records by third parties without direct influence on the part of the Tracing Service. This very fruitful way of document acquisition only took effect in the initial years of the ITS. At that time, the Allies entrusted this institution brought into being by themselves with larger stocks, which had fallen into their hands in the form of booty. This either immediately after their takeover or only after an evaluation of their own, e.g. for the numerous court trials like those at the "Internationaler Militärgerichtshof" (International Military Court) in Nuremberg (IMG), the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials, etc.
- The active collection of personal records since 1955, in accordance with the mandate set down in the Bonn Agreements. A task that had only been implemented to a limited extent in the first 25 years, because many offices – particularly in foreign countries – were not yet willing during those years, and partly are still not today, to admit an inspection of their stocks or even a duplication. One obstacle that had always been in the way of a takeover of larger amounts were the limited own financial means for this purpose. Although a purchase had never come into consideration, the restricted funds available for travel expenses impeded the implementation of the planned operations, particularly abroad, at that time and still obstruct them today. In the rarest cases, the ITS is granted the privilege of taking over

original documents still today. Mostly, the specialists from Bad Arolsen have to content themselves with sorting the records out on the spot and then taking them over as paper copy or on microfilm. As the confirmations and the Excerpts from Documents of the ITS with the seal of the ICRC are acknowledged worldwide without certification by a lawyer, an ITS-employee must have had the original in his hands at least once before the duplication and subsequent inventory-taking. Only few third offices are willing to give originals out of the house for the purpose of a duplication, which is why this task is chiefly fulfilled on the spot and therefore requires travelling.

Since the 1980s, only the third variant of the receipt of records has been topical. This, however, fortunately with a gradually increasing significance. The ITS is endeavouring to trace and take over as many pieces of evidence as possible at specialized archives, communities, penal institutions, firms, etc., since a successful conclusion of the processing in Arolsen directly depends on the efforts in the fulfilment of this mandate. The objective is not only to collect as many documents as possible, but above all to collect such documents that contain names, which have so far been completely lacking at the Tracing Service.

The actual work is performed as follows:

1. Writing to third offices that, within the scope of the case processing, have given a positive reply to an ITS-request regarding an individual inquiry, for which the respective evidence was not available in Bad Arolsen.

If the caseworkers cannot ascertain any traces in the ITS-documentation for an inquirer, they write, if the former employer or place of employment are mentioned, to this firm or its successor company and/or to the residents' registra-

tion office. If the answer is positive, it can be assumed that further valuable personal information is on hand there.

2. Systematic registration of materials in an exactly defined geographic area, above all in the Federal Republic of Germany, but also in Austria and partly in Poland and the Ukraine.

Here, the Document Acquisition Section set up particularly for this purpose writes, without a previous indication on the part of an inquirer, from Bad Arolsen to potential “owners” in an exactly defined area. The result are subsequent coordinated trips to several offices.

As far as the acquisition of records from public offices is concerned, the approval of the respective data protection commissioner is necessary in the run-up. If, for example, an office raised objections in spite of the written consent available at the beginning of the work – as it happened in Austria in 2000 – this could bring a current operation to a complete standstill. Fortunately, the doubts were clarified and resolved by the Austrian Ministry of the Interior quickly.

3. Specific acquisition at individual offices in foreign countries. A selective proceeding is usually possible where larger stocks of one single office are known and/or become accessible for the Tracing Service for the first time. With the political changes in Europe at the beginning of the 1990s, the ITS succeeded in gaining access to many documents that had been closed so far, but that are important for the provision of evidence for the persons concerned. One of the first successes, and meaning a turning point in this field, was the permission given in Moscow in late autumn 1989 – by the then still existing USSR – for a duplication of the 44 Auschwitz death books that had been preserved. Just as in

the case of this particular operation, the ITS is again and again asked, before taking up the work, to sign a contract that exactly regulates the utilization of the copies. This way, the offices handing over the documents make sure of the maintenance of the power of disposal for themselves over the stock to be acquired.

Hitherto performed respectively planned document acquisition
(ca. 300 linear metres of new records per year)

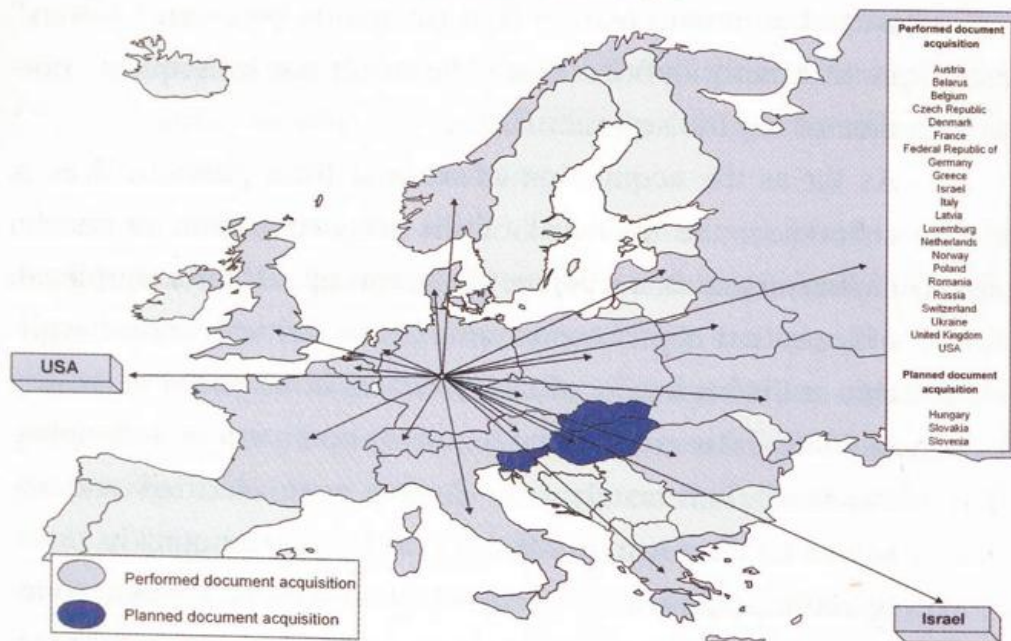


Illustration 2: Worldwide document acquisition

The Document Acquisition Section has three employees who plan the operations independently and completely. This undertaking requires a considerable degree of flexibility, because often, in spite of long months of preparation of the individual operations, doors again and again open suddenly to records, which represent a valuable supplementation to the available stock and thus require preferential action.

The teams driving out are recruited from the entire staff. Depending on the region and knowledge of languages, these are newly composed in each case. Throughout the year, trips take place from Arolsen and from the Berlin branch office to the old and new federal states, to Austria and Poland. Furthermore, trips by plane to archives, for example in Israel, Belarus, Russia, the Ukraine etc., have been necessary in the last years.

Until the middle of 2001, the employees had to rely on a duplication of the documents by means of transportable microfilm cameras. After a longer period of testing and in the course of the conversion of as many working steps as possible to an electronic procedure, it became feasible to take a completely new method – that had been developed according to a catalogue of requirements compiled by the ITS – into operation. This permits a fast injection of the gained information into the available ITS-database. The new digital registration system will be described in detail in the text about the future document acquisition.

The Mandate of Classification

The stock of documents at the ITS amounts to approximately 25,000 linear metres of paper lined up vertically sheet to sheet and is stored in 17 different record units. This stock represents the basis of any kind of assistance on the part of the ITS. Confirmations and Excerpts from Documents about the persecution suffered as a whole or about a specific part of the persecution logically can only be issued if respective pieces of evidence, that is personal records, are available. Only these make it possible, more than half a century after the events, to unmistakably identify the individual and to supply unmistakable information about the former place of stay and/or the work on the territory of the Third Reich.

The available stock of documents is therefore a reliable image – though unfortunately only an incomplete one – of the complexity of the persecution. Just as diverse as the individual fates suffered were, just as different are the stocks of documents that have been preserved until today. Not only optically in respect of the format, but in particular as far as the significance and thus the value as evidence is concerned. Even within one and the same category, the preserved stock varies considerably.

The gaps, the most different sizes and the quality of the material itself are presently causing enormous problems regarding the electronic registration and the restoration, which will be subject of the account later on.

The employees of the first hour – often former persecutees themselves and therefore having a command of the many languages (especially Slavic ones) – had been endeavouring right from the beginning to bring all records into a special order (adapted from the original registrations). The alphabetically-phonetically extremely varying registrations of one and the same person in partly more than 20 dif-

ferent documents were to be and still are to be brought together. A special classification system for this task had to be developed, since it was not possible, particularly regarding list material (where many names are compiled on one sheet), to file all documents for one person together in one dossier.

The archival order chosen since then represents in some respects a reflection of the chronology of the events during and after the war. Exceptions are the relatively few records of the pre-war time. These are exclusively preserved in the so-called Concentration Camp Documents Section. Often, the individual document units do not permit any conclusions regarding the receipt of the records themselves, since, in respect of the original as well as of the present-day accessions, it is extremely seldom that a complete category of material has found its way to Bad Arolsen. Still today, there are new records again and again about registrations in the concentration camps, which emerge only now or become accessible at all.

The finally chosen three rough subdivisions are based on a common division into individual documents and list material. Such a partition had to be made, because otherwise the connection of the registrations for one and the same person would hardly be possible. This filing system, however, presupposes a central access.

Central Index of Names

The key to the extensive and most various records of the ITS is the Central Index of Names. Since information is available here from a very large number of countries, the most different spellings of the names rendered it necessary to develop an own research system. Thanks to the originally elaborated and, in the course of the years, more and more refined alphabetical-phonetic order, it is possible to trace all available references to registrations in the records them-

selves relating to one person relatively fast. Presently, this Index holds more than ca. 47 million individual references for altogether more than 17 million former civilian persecutees. These key figures alone already speak for themselves, as far as the extent of the numerous documents stored in Bad Arolsen is concerned.

The origin of this Index is the registration of the displaced persons, after their liberation in the DP-camps, on so-called DP-3 cards. All subsequent registrations of the names in the actual documents or from the correspondence (card-indexing of inquiries) of more than half a century are united in one place here. The Central Index of Names thus consists of a certain part of original registration records as well as of reference cards written by the ITS itself, which have the same paper format.

For two years now, all checks of the requests in the Central Index of Names have been made exclusively by computer. The prerequisite for this paperless, efficient processing form was the desire to achieve an electronic research in the entire stock of information and documentation of the ITS. In 1998, this automation project consistently began with the scanning of front and reverse sides of the ca. 47 million index cards of the Central Index of Names. It took even less than two years to capture all index card images on hard disk. The entire index, which – distributed over several rooms – takes ca. 136 m² of space, may now be found in a steel cabinet, only half filled, of even less than 0.5 m² of floor space. The required individual software for the research in the digitized Central Index of Names was created by the firm “Zentrum für Neue Ingenieur- und Softwaretechnologien (ZNT)” in Burghausen. The difficult translation of the alphabetical-phonetic system into the program represented a particular challenge in this connection.

In view of this procedure, which, superficially seen, is little spectacular and which had already soon been integrated in the daily busi-

ness of the ITS, the difficulties and strains the employees of the ITS had to cope with, in order to reduce this "paper mountain" within less than two years, are easily forgotten. Owing to the permanent use of the equipment in shifts, among other things, scanner problems (jamming, dust, electronic failures) took turns with problems of the server (long backup times, failures of components) and general organizational difficulties.

In this connection, the decisive aim of making the scanned index card-images researchable, i.e. of providing them with an index capable of searching, consisting of family name, first name and date of birth of the "card-indexed" person, had been achieved in concept by the EDP and management consulting firm "Ossenberg & Schneider", Remagen, accompanying the overall project, already in the run-up. A completely automatic character recognition was inconceivable due to the differences of the cards in respect of size, layout and writing (in many cases even in handwriting). Likewise, a completely manual input of the index data had to be ruled out; the estimated expenditure of time of more than 200 years of work for one person was neither to be performed by the own personnel nor to be financed as a business service. By using an existing database as well as an "intelligent" automatic recognition and interpretation of the index cards drawn up with this database application, it was possible to generate a partial index working by means of supportive bases. Together with the strictly maintained sequence information, a specific and efficient search in the stock of the scanned index cards as well as of the meanwhile added new data records is rendered feasible.

The efforts have been worthwhile. The access to this stock, which is now available immediately at the workstations by computer, has not only become faster many times over, but certain steps of work – e.g. the alphabetization and insertion of new cards, more than 1 million per year after all – have even been cancelled without replace-

ment. Moreover, the possibility has arisen to react very flexibly to changing quantitative requirements. A considerable advantage, which has become very obvious particularly recently within the scope of the checks for the indemnification fund for forced labourers. While, in the conventional working method, strict limits were set to the parallel use of the Central Index of Names due to the spatial conditions, the number of employees assigned for checks may now be increased almost at will. Restrictions are, at the most, imposed by the capacity of the servers at disposal and of the internal network.

Stock of Documents of the International Tracing Service

The records left to the ITS are filed according to the needs of the tracing service work – and not, as often assumed, according to certain criteria, e.g. camps, geographic names, categories of persecution, nationalities etc. –, namely in three groups:

- Concentration Camp Documents,
- Wartime Documents,
- Post-War Documents.

The original cards, which are contained in the Central Index of Names as registrations of the Allies, would actually also have to be filed here. These are automatically taken into consideration in the processing of every inquiry. As they cannot be administered and checked apart from the other indexes, an exclusion from the following separate subdivision of the original records is justified.

Concentration Camp Documents

The name itself already roughly describes the actual stock. Concerned are exclusively the registrations of persecutees in the early camps of the pre-war time, the concentration camps during the events themselves, up to the late liberation of Camp Mauthausen on 5th May 1945 respectively of numerous outlying or sub-commandos in the days after (Commando Brünnlitz of Camp Gross-Rosen, according to the statement of a prisoner, even as late as on 09.05.45) as well as, to a very small extent, registrations made by the Allies immediately after the liberation of the same.

According to German jurisdiction, based on the Register of Places of Detention under the Reichsführer-SS¹¹, 22 camps with more than 1,000 outlying and sub-commandos belong to this category. Although of less significance in respect of the quantity, the available collection of the Gestapo Indexes should also be mentioned for the sake of completeness. These registrations, which also unmistakably document an arrest or detention, are subdivided for their part into two own categories:

- Deportation records. These chiefly include the names of Jews from Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Poland, former Czechoslovakia etc.
- Prison records. They concern the registration of predominantly non-German inmates in the prisons.

Unfortunately, owing to the turmoil of war, only a fragmentary collection is at disposal particularly regarding this material as well. Furthermore, this stock consists of preserved registrations in the ghettos and transit camps.

Even though the procedure was not uniform everywhere, certain forms of registration still repeat themselves within the mentioned

types of persecution, which had their own registration criteria outside the civilian registration system. These are, for example:

Individual documents

- Prisoners' personal cards and sheets
- Effect cards
- Infirmary cards
- Labour assignment cards
- Mail control cards
- Money administration cards
- Writing room cards
- Death certificates
- Prison index
- Military Government of Germany

Concentration Camp Inmates Questionnaires

List material

- Lists of arrival
- Reports on changes in the number of prisoners
- Transport lists
- Lists of examinations by the camp physician
- Premium lists
- Block transfers
- Prisoners' infirmary lists

The mentioned individual and list records are a random selection within various possible arrangements. For example, in addition to the infirmary cards, the lists about medical examinations of prisoners for different purposes, discharge orders, lists about pseudo-medical experiments like typhus experiments etc. could be enumerated in the field of medicine. In respect of the reports on changes in the number of prisoners, for instance, all registrations about deceased prisoners,

number books, lists about changes of names and prisoner's numbers, diverse registers of names, reports on escapes, and registrations about recaptured prisoners etc. would also have to be testified to. As a complete stock of documents is lacking for any of the camps, partly only a fragmentary collection is on hand, depending on the place of persecution. Extremely different and more detailed registrations also exist regarding the examples of the two other categories cited below. In the appendix, a selection of the concentration camp, wartime and post-war documents preserved at the ITS is presented. Also at this point, it should once again be clearly emphasized that all of the chosen records are available in the most different quantities. The examples given as well as the remaining stock do not claim to be complete, neither regarding individual places of persecution nor for the total stock of documents. If the ITS possessed all records drawn up at that time, the stock would be many times larger today.

The aforementioned records constitute a stock of more than 5 million individual documents in index form and more than 6,000 files with list material. As the term concentration camp only covers a certain type of this category, the expression places of detention would be more accurate.

Completely lacking are registrations of:

- deaths at the time of the arresting
- victims of the mass executions by the task forces
- victims of the selections in the Camps Auschwitz and Lublin-Majdanek
- persons committed to the Camps Belzec, Chelmno (Kulmhof), Maly Trostinec, Riga-Jungfernhof, Sobibor and Treblinka, and
- the numerous persons who perished during the evacuation marches, also called death marches.

Many deaths of civilians were never even registered as such during the Second World War at all, which is why they cannot leave any traces at the ITS.

Digression about the close cooperation with the Special Registry Office

From all those people who claimed for compensation, the bureaucracy that had soon returned after the war demanded a proof. The prerequisite for the settlement of administrative steps by the relatives was the provision of confirmations at the ITS. For attestations of deaths in the concentration camps, the Special Registry Office had to be contacted as well. After these camps had been dissolved, the camps' own "registry offices" did not exist any longer. The registers of the same had for a large part been destroyed or were abroad beyond reach. Besides this, many deaths had only been documented insufficiently, which made this matter even more difficult.

The legislator, the Land Hessen, declared the Special Registry Office in Arolsen responsible "for the documentation of the deaths in the concentration camps...., as far as they are reported by the IRO"¹² by means of the "Zweite Hessische Verordnung" (second Hessian decree) of 1st September 1949. By the change of the "Personenstandsgesetz" (personal status law) in 1951, the validity of this regulation was extended to the entire territory of the Federal Republic¹³. As of 1st January 1971, the Special Registry Office has been affiliated with the Registry Office in Bad Arolsen. It is thus subordinate to the municipal authorities of this town that also supervise its work ("Dienstaufsicht"). The government supervision ("Fachaufsicht") is incumbent on the "Landrat" (head of the administration) of the Rural District

Waldeck-Frankenberg as inferior and the "Regierungspräsident" (chief administrator of the region) in Kassel as superior supervisory authority. The Land Hessen continues to pay for the costs of the Special Registry Office.

§ 43a of the "Personenstandsgesetz (PStG)" defines as the task of the Special Registry Office the documentation of the deaths of prisoners of former German concentration camps¹⁴. This determines the field of work for the registrars of the Special Registry Office. The documentation of deaths in the ghettos does not belong to the field of work. The sphere of responsibility, however, also includes the concentration camps in foreign countries. Only such deaths in concentration camps are documented that had not been documented before and about which documents may in fact be obtained.

The work is done reciprocally, following the principle of the division of labour in

1. the document inspection office
2. the documentation of the deaths.

The document inspection office was created at the time as an innovation in the system of registry offices. It is entitled, in addition to the "deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der ehemaligen deutschen Wehrmacht (WASSt)" (German office for the notification of the next-of-kin of members of the former German Wehrmacht who were killed in action) and any person who witnessed the death or is informed about it from his/her own knowledge, to report deaths in the concentration camps. It provides the flexibility required due to the special nature of the concentration camp deaths, because not all records available

reveal the proof of death in a way that is sufficient for a documentation according to §§ 32 and 33 PStG and thus proceedings according to § 45 PStG become unnecessary.

In spite of an extensive documentation, the ITS holds the complete registration of all names only for two camps, namely for Dachau and Buchenwald. Of all other former places of persecution, the Tracing Service has collections at its disposal of extremely differing sizes, i.e. from mediocre or scanty up to no registrations at all.

In 2003, with the advanced introduction of the electronic processing at the ITS, a cooperation between the Special Registry Office and the Tracing Service in this field has also been started on, which will bring about a considerable facilitation. In respect of the inquiries concerned, in which the inquirer asks for a death certificate of a relative and the ITS has the exact information about the death at its disposal, the necessary data may be conveyed electronically. In this connection, it has not been clarified yet how the examination of the original documents will turn out to be made in future.

Which fatal consequences may occur, if general conclusions are drawn particularly on the basis of incompletely available information, is shown, among other things, by the controversy about the interpretation of the figures published by the Special Registry Office in its annual report about the death certificates issued. The passionate trials before the different Canadian courts at the end of the 1980s speak volumes for this. There, the public prosecutor's office found itself compelled to correct historically untenable conclusions. For most of the records preserved at the ITS reservations are therefore necessary in respect of any attempt of gathering absolutely secured statistical findings from the still available recorded material.

Wartime Documents

Although the name for this category of records is correct, it is still also misleading. Considered chronologically, the concentration camp documents would also have to be counted as belonging to these. Those responsible at the ITS at that time chose this terminology exclusively for all registrations of persons who were recorded outside the already enumerated camps during the war. Chiefly concerned are therefore forced labourers who had to be registered according to the guidelines of the public registration system. In accordance with Order No. 163 of the occupation forces to all German offices, these had to register retrospectively all foreigners, who had resided on the territory of today's Federal Republic of Germany in the time from 1939-1945, in all four zones immediately after the war. The documents and records of the authorities, like personal status records and staff lists of former employers, contained an inconceivable "mass of data" for numerous nationalities. This impressive collection of documents as far as its quantity is concerned is subdivided as follows:

Individual documents

- Personal status records
(registry office documentation)
- Wartime index
(e.g. individual records of the employers, sickness funds,
registration offices etc.)

List material about

- deceased foreigners
- graves of foreigners
- marriages of foreigners

- births of non-Germans
- inventory registers of all personal assets left by foreigners
- legal and official files about foreigners
- employment lists of former employers
- reports on times of insurance

The restriction, according to which registrations that were lost due to the effects of the war are lacking, applies here as well. Besides this, the ITS unfortunately did not always receive a duplicate of the collection that had presumably been compiled completely at the time, which is why confirmations for single communities or parts of the same on the basis of this documentation are impossible.

Nevertheless, the records taken over represent an impressive quantity:

- ca. 2 million lists
- 1.8 million individual documents and cards
- 300,000 registrations of the Berlin Index
- 20,000 cards of the "Organisation Todt".

Post-War Documents

The registration of all persons, from then on to be designated as former civilian persecutees of the National Socialist Regime, was incumbent on the initially mentioned successor organizations of the SHAEF. In addition to these, many other institutions endeavoured to achieve an as complete registration of individual groups of persecutees as possible. Representative of all, the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) and the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) should be mentioned.

Thanks to the help granted in the repatriation respectively the assistance in the efforts for a successful emigration, the registrations available in Bad Arolsen cover the time up to the emigration by plane or embarkation on the transoceanic steamers (the so-called shipping lists).

The catalogue of post-war registrations is composed as follows:

Individual documents

- DP-2 Index
- CM-1 (care and maintenance) sheets

List material

- registration lists
- repatriation lists
- emigration lists.

The total number of these persons registered in the years 1945-1952 amounts to a little more than:

- 3.5 million cards of the DP-2 Index
- 350,000 CM-1 sheets and
- 1.7 million sheets of list material.

As a characteristic of classification, the subdivision according to places in alphabetical and within these in chronological order was chosen. An additional criterion of classification is the subdivision into DP-lists Europe and DP-lists overseas.

In summary, the collection of personal documents of the ITS is subdivided – depending on the type or category of persecution – as it is shown by the following illustration. One and the same former persecutee may well have belonged to several of these categories or have gone through various stages within one and the same category.

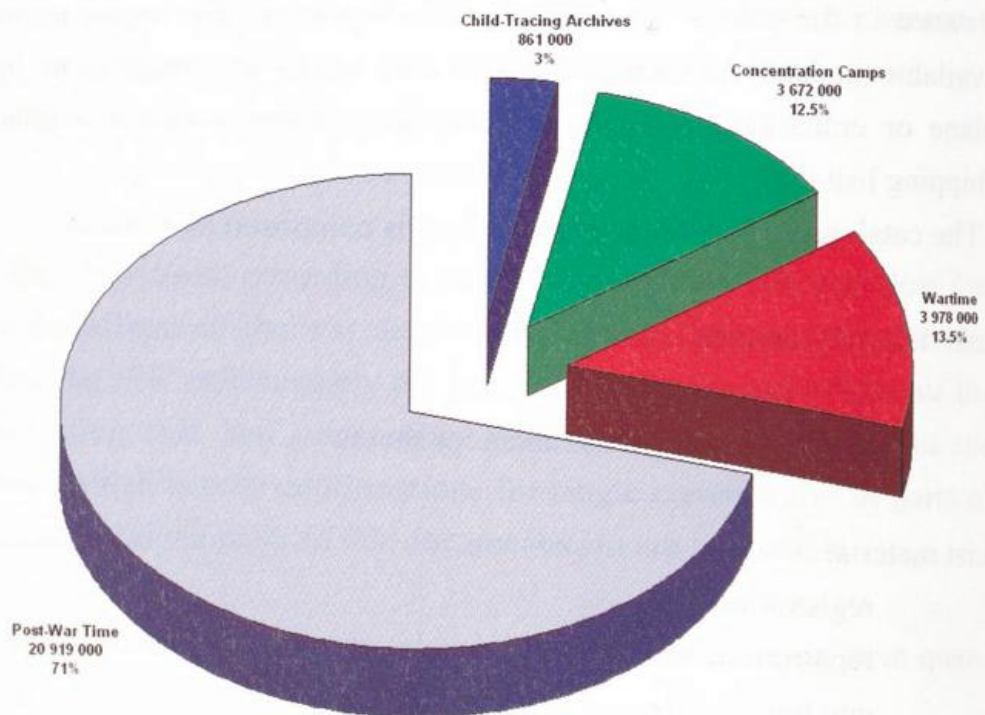


Illustration 3: The stock of personal data of the ITS

All pieces of information about the persecution available at the ITS are important for the provision of evidence by the persons concerned. Considered from this point of view, a valuation of the different categories is not possible. The large number of post-war records, however, are of special significance, because, in addition to the actual evidence, they also furnish the proof of having survived at the end of the war. This represents, above all, the basis of any promising and thus sensible investigations regarding the further fate, in the course of which an odyssey through several countries, or even continents, has often not been unusual.

The Mandate of Preservation

The expression “preservation” used in the Bonn Agreements for the third mandate may be understood in two senses from an archive-technical point of view. The “mandators”, when they assigned this task, did – as is unmistakably documented by the concurrent translation into the French language – not only determine the securing of the information, but above all the physical preservation of the documents, which is tantamount to a preservation of the original stock.

The records stored in Arolsen, as far as the original documents are concerned, all come from the time between 1933 and 1945 as well as from the immediate post-war time. A large part of the same consists of “war paper” of particularly poor quality, which is ageing very fast. The autocatalytic process of paper disintegration ensues in an exponential way, which simulates an initial stability. This supposed security turns out to be deceptive after the intensive use as means of work already very soon, which is clearly proven by the damages that have occurred gradually. Since many documents are unique and since the progressing disintegration of the paper, which is usually containing mechanical wood pulp and has been produced acidly, would – even if not used – soon result in a total loss, the ITS decided in spring 2000 to have a damage analysis made.

Further factors, like “mechanical damages” owing to former attempts of stabilization by means of lamination and sealing of certain stocks, effects of writing substances like ink, indelible pencils, stamps etc., mechanical defects in consequence of metal contamination, cracks, tears as well as ruptures, accelerate and intensify this process. Even the storing conditions, which are not too bad, require certain adaptations in order to stop the decomposition. If a preservation of these unique and valuable records is not called into question,

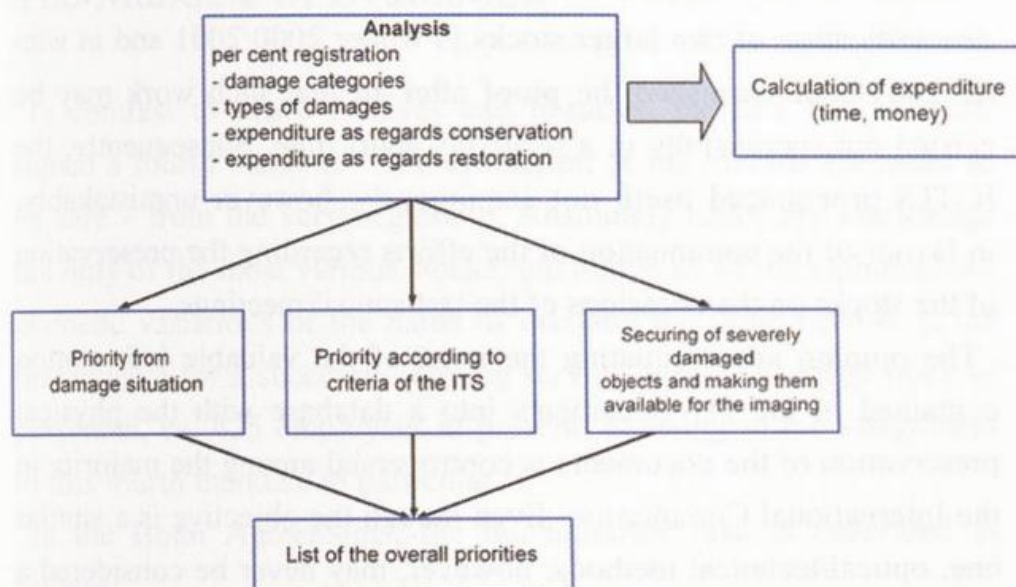
a responsible procedure demands the urgent initiation of conservation and restoration measures that cannot be postponed any longer.

The magnitude of the damages may be reflected best by means of figures:

- 1,504,000 records are threatened by a loss of material due to mechanical damages
- 1,200,200 documents were provided with adhesive tapes
- 1,063,000 cases of metal contamination
- 470,400 laminations
- 12,000 poorly legible papers

As the disintegration process is irreversible, i.e. a further decomposition of the material will result in increasing losses, the efforts necessary for a restoration are rising exponentially with the increasing age. This means that more and more funds will be required if the beginning of the work is delayed. Due to the considerable extent of the stock, a longer processing period is inevitable, even if the financing is guaranteed. The period of ca. 10 years to be considered as realistic requires the classification of the damages to be removed according to priorities. This is supposed to prevent that the most endangered records will already be in a condition that is no longer worth a restoration before the conclusion of the work.

Together with a firm in Leipzig, specialized in this field of work, the ITS has chosen the procedure presented in the following illustration for planning the absolutely necessary work to be done:



Parallel: - Registration of the storage situation (climate, light, way of preservation)
 - Preparation of an emergency concept
 - Development of protective coverings suitable for an archival preservation that should fit into the available shelves

Illustration 4: Damage analysis of the stocks preserved at the ITS

In spite of the beginning of the preliminary examination in 1999 and in spite of the available damage analysis respectively concept for a longer-term implementation of steps determined together, it has not been possible so far to systematically start on the work due to the lack of an appropriation of respective funds. In spring 2002, the International Commission dealt with this subject for the fourth time. Basically, the members agree that at least all personal original documents – in order to guarantee their preservation and if they are a proof of the persecution and thus a remembrance of the same – require a restoration.

Thanks to the support of the ICRC, the complete, i.e. global deacidification of two larger stocks in winter 2000/2001 and in winter 2001/2002 furnished the proof after all that such work may be carried out successfully in a relatively short time. Subsequently, the IC/ITS pronounced itself, not unanimously, however unmistakably, in favour of the continuation of the efforts regarding the preservation of the stocks on the occasions of the last annual meetings.

The opinion about equating the input of the valuable information contained in the ITS-documents into a database with the physical preservation of the documents is controversial among the majority in the International Commission. Even though the objective is a similar one, optical/technical methods, however, may never be considered a replacement for the endeavours of conserving these historical pieces of evidence from that time. Both activities even supplement each other, because, in consequence of the current work on the images, i.e. the duplicates, the refurbished documents will only be subjected to considerably reduced strains and, this way, the duration of life of the original documents will increase substantially.

In the prospects regarding the Mandate of Preservation, a detailed description of the efforts planned in this field for the near future will follow.

The Mandate of Evaluation

In contrast to many archives and libraries, the ITS has been assigned a fourth mandate – the evaluation of the records entrusted to its care – from the very beginning. Absolutely necessary knowledge not only of the most various stocks, but above all of the alphabetical-phonetic variations of the name of one and the same person, is the prerequisite for a successful tracing service work. The large stock of personnel, ca. 425 employees at present, is owing to the assignment of this fourth mandate in particular.

In the Bonn Agreements, the humanitarian task is described as follows:

“... that an International Tracing Service was established in Arolsen, in order to search for missing persons and to assemble, classify and preserve the records about Germans and non-Germans who were imprisoned in National Socialist concentration or labour camps or about non-Germans who were displaced as a result of World War II and to make them available to governments and interested individuals”¹⁵.

This description of the activity of the Tracing Service at the same time defines unmistakably the group of persons the ITS is responsible for, namely: the German and non-German civilian persecutees, and this irrespective of the reason of persecution, i.e. the race, the religion, the ethnic origin, the creed or the political leanings.

In the course of the work exclusively in the service of the former persecutees of National Socialism, meanwhile going on for 60 years, the number of incoming inquiries has always been subject to greater fluctuations. In addition to the annually returning, seasonally different peaks in the number of incoming mail, considerable alternations have occurred regularly owing to the fact that new laws concerning indemnification, the opening of new funds etc., have come into force

again and again. Considered from an overall point of view, the amount of incoming requests has risen constantly since 1985. This contrary to any prognosis, since the average age of the persons concerned is permanently rising with the increasing distance to the events.

The correspondence arriving in Arolsen clearly reveals that many former persecutees just have the possibility now to assert their rights or that many have not even wished to do so earlier at all. After a long silence, some are finally only able today to concern themselves with the past. With the elapse of time, the issuing of replies, however, proves to be more and more difficult owing to imprecise accounts of the facts. The consequence of this is obvious. More and more comprehensive investigations are necessary, in order to ascertain evidential records and to achieve unmistakable identifications.

In spite of effective measures, like the hiring of new personnel – the staff has almost doubled in the last ten years – and a substantial amount of overtime work, the caseworkers had no chance any more to get the situation within the scope of the processing according to mandate – i.e. the as complete certification as possible of the entire persecution from the arrest via the deportation, the forced labour and/or stay in a camp, up to the liberation – under control. The increase of the processing periods as well as of the backlog of work was inevitable. In spite of the repeated applications for and gradual allocations of additional posts, it was simply no longer possible to cope with the flood of inquiries, which showed an up to tenfold increase in the figures of incoming mail in the monthly comparison in the 1990s.

For this reason, the International Commission agreed, on the occasion of the Annual Meeting 1994 in Jerusalem¹⁶, to the request of the ITS to give up the complete processing according to mandate in certain cases for the first time. In the procedure of the so-called

“short processing”, the inquirer just receives an abridged answer, which only deals with the concrete question. In contrast to the complete confirmation of all facts, if possible, the short procedure exclusively answers the question necessary for a specific kind of indemnification. An evaluation of all pieces of information, which are stored in the most different sections, is done without in this case.

Besides this, the close cooperation with other institutions brings about the guarantee to be able to give an answer within 6 months. Before the dispatch to Arolsen, they collect the inquiries and transfer them onto standardized bilingual questionnaires. The “picking out” of the essential information for the check as well as the translation of the letters are no longer necessary within this procedure either. As a last fundamental advantage, the transmission of the inquiries in batches into both directions may be mentioned.

In spite of some few disadvantages as, for example, the inevitable follow-up work in some cases (owing to necessary requests for additional information), the advantages, however, clearly prevail. Nonetheless, this considerably simpler procedure was not able to cope with the great flood of inquiries, which set in at the ITS after the announcement of the opening of a DM 10 billion fund in the world press.

The limitations of the past have unchanged validity, namely:

- the increase of the number of staff requires the commitment of an extraordinarily large number of employees, who have worked here for many years, to the training and
- further curtailments in the organizational procedure inevitably entail impairments in the quality of the replies.

A solution to the meanwhile dramatic race against time may only be achieved by means of the use of an integrated computer system.

Within the shortest possible time, it has been feasible to change the short processing into a so-called list procedure (which may also be applied in paper form). This new concept of a fast checking work and thus settlement is chiefly based on the electronic evaluation of the Central Index of Names-database. Since, however, new personal documents are permanently flowing into the checking procedure and since several inquiries for the same person may arrive in Arolsen, the actual status in the workflow – which is in a stage of extension – has to be taken into consideration with regard to the representation of the current procedure.

Present Stage Workflow

The workflow solution at the ITS offers a support by information technology in all fields of the processing of inquiries: incoming requests are taken over into the computer system by scanning respectively disk import, are registered there and afterwards processed electronically, paperless to the maximum possible extent, under the control of the workflow software.

Imaging of the Documents

Already soon after the successes of the imaging of the Central Index of Names had become visible, the planning of the imaging of the stock of documents was started. From the very beginning, it was clear that a considerably longer time horizon and a larger overall expenditure would have to be calculated for this measure. After all, an extremely heterogeneous stock of documents is concerned here, which varies as regards

- storage medium (paper, microfilm, microfiche),
- type of filing (index, file) and classification system,

- mechanical and optical quality and
- type of writing and legibility as well as the relevance of colour information.

In accordance with this, also different scanner systems, an adapted image editing as well as specific attributing methods have to be installed. As an important initial condition, however, it always has to be considered that the conventional filing system is also reflected in the electronic archives to be newly set up. On the one hand, it is vital – as before in the field of the Central Index of Names – to offer to the employees, for whom, in most cases, already the use of the PC is new and unfamiliar, the customary structures on the screen as well and to thus facilitate the conversion and the familiarization. On the other hand, however, the possibility has to be provided to allocate the references of the Central Index of Names, mostly indicated by using the partial stock, file number and page number, to the documents manually or through automatic processes, in order to be able to find information about the persons card-indexed in the Central Index of Names quickly. The fundamental correlations between these data stocks are outlined in the following illustration:

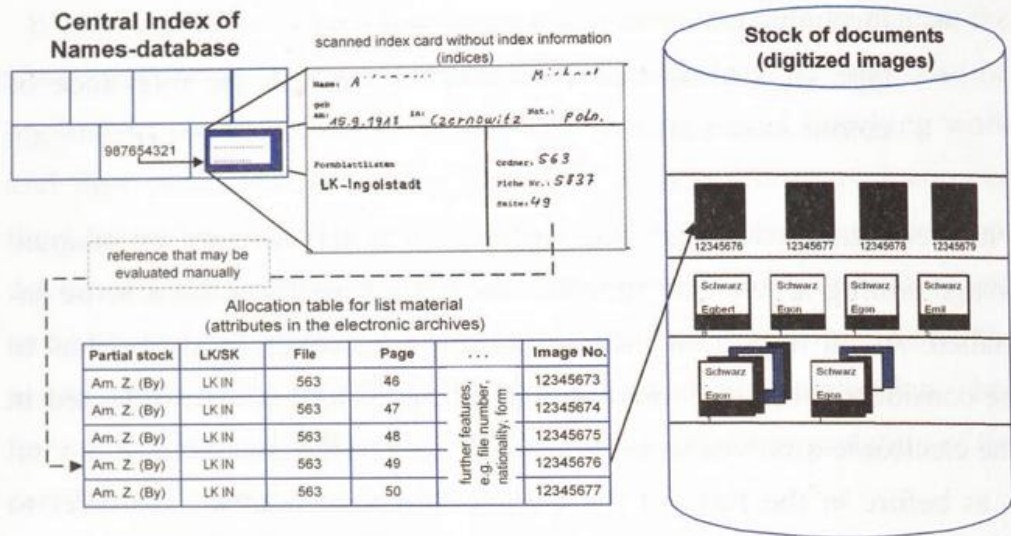


Illustration 5: References of the Central Index of Names to the stock of documents

After completing the concept of the electronic archives, the processing of the newly received documents had to be converted, and this concurrently, to a fully electronic working process and filing of the documents in the electronic archives as well. This was, on the one hand, necessary for logistic reasons, in order to “freeze” the documents stocks for the scanning. On the other hand, it became possible this way to make personnel capacities available that were indispensable in order to be able to implement the scanning and indexing work by one’s own efforts.

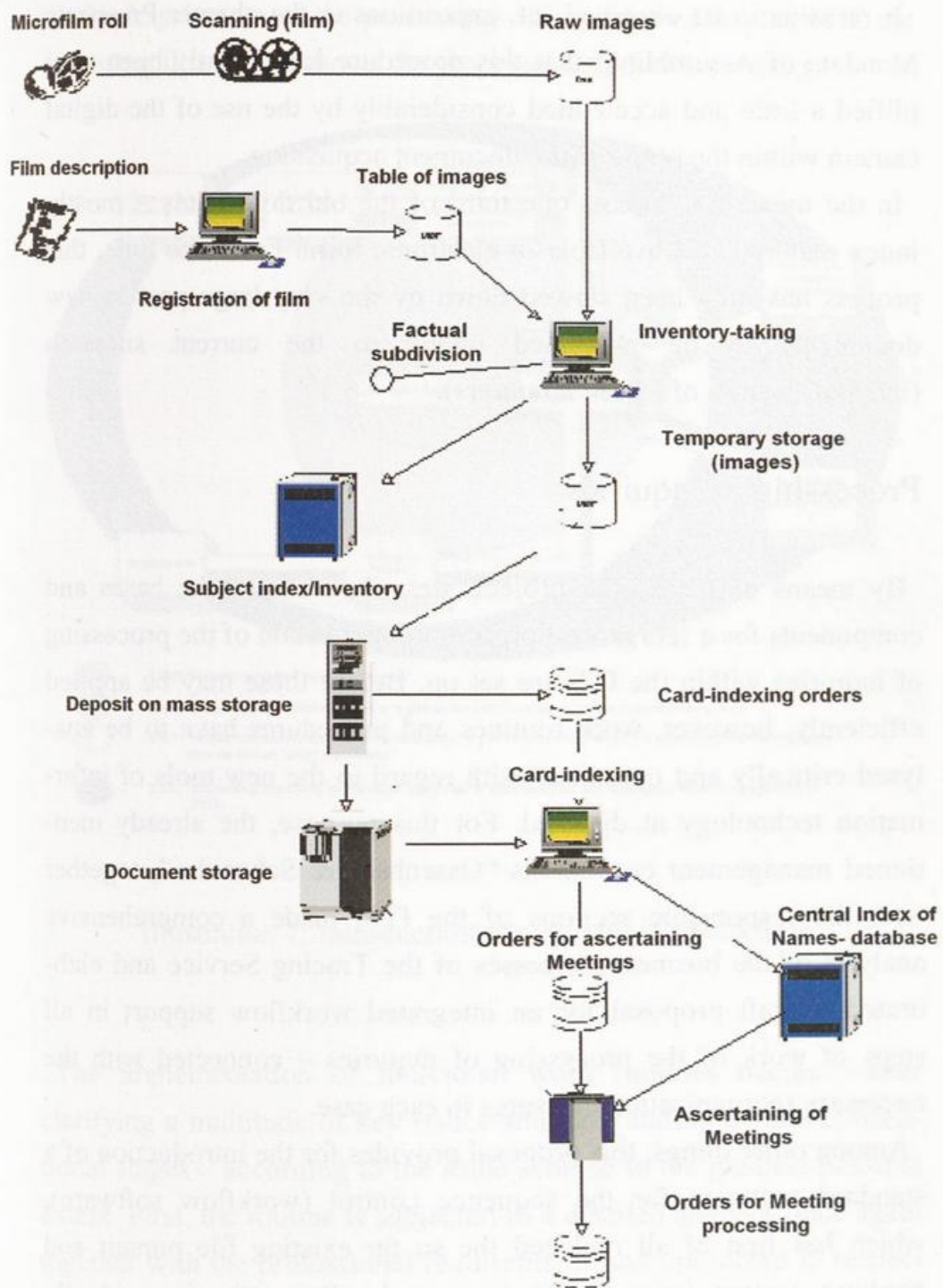


Illustration 6: Basic routine of the processing of newly acquired documents

It remains to be observed (cf. expositions in the chapter Prospects Mandate of Assembling) that this procedure has recently been simplified a little and accelerated considerably by the use of the digital camera within the scope of the document acquisition.

In the meantime, almost one third of the old documents – mostly index material – is available in electronic form. For some time, this process has only been slowed down by the very large part of new documents to be processed owing to the current situation (indemnification of forced labourers).

Processing of Inquiries

By means of the partial projects described above, the bases and components for a reorganization and rationalization of the processing of inquiries within the ITS are set up. Before these may be applied efficiently, however, work routines and procedures have to be analysed critically and optimized with regard to the new tools of information technology at disposal. For this purpose, the already mentioned management consultants “Ossenberg & Schneider”, together with the responsible sections of the ITS, made a comprehensive analysis of the business processes of the Tracing Service and elaborated a draft proposal for an integrated workflow support in all steps of work of the processing of inquiries – connected with the necessary reorganization measures in each case.

Among other things, this proposal provides for the introduction of a standard software for the sequence control (workflow software), which has first of all replaced the so far existing file pursuit and booking system (case distribution) and, afterwards, is gradually substituting the traditional working processes in a transition and conversion period of several years respectively is applying selected individual functions for the facilitation of the work. Proceeding from

the basic principle of the processing of inquiries within the ITS, the following illustration shows the proposed introduction strategy:

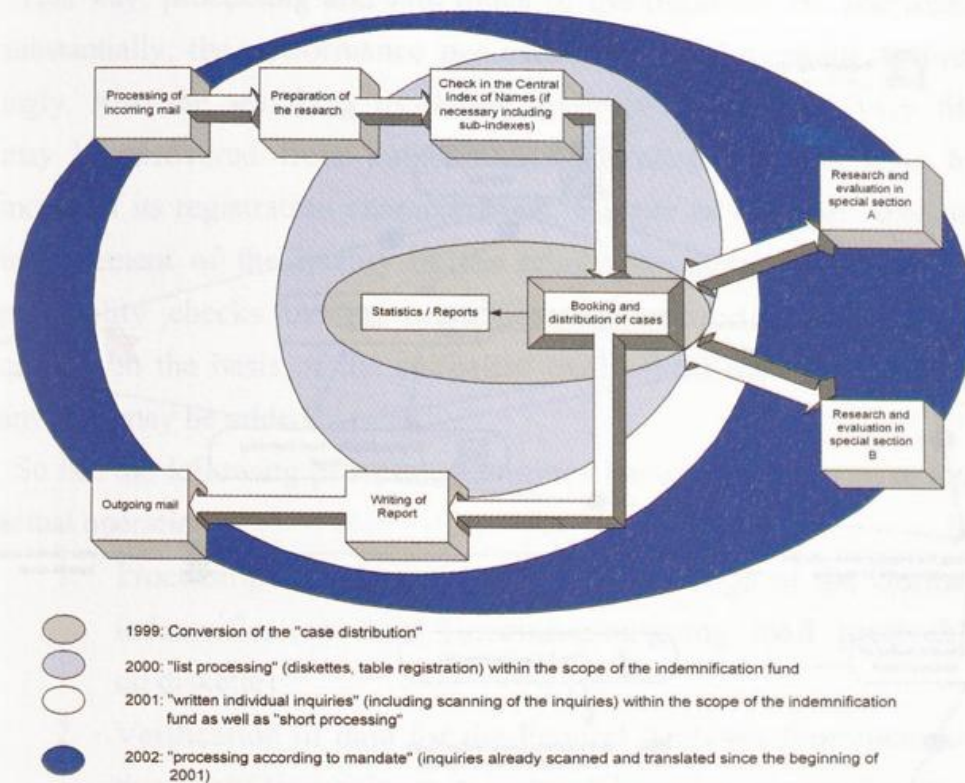


Illustration 7: Introduction strategy for the workflow

The implementation of individual work routines occurs – after clarifying a multitude of key issues and determining certain conceptual stages – according to the same scheme to the greatest possible extent. First, the routine is subjected to a detailed analysis once again together with the professional requirements and optimized in respect of the electronic processing form. The new work routines are then exemplarily saved in the workflow solution. Representatively, the following illustration shows the routine for the Central Index of

Names-processing (individual inquiries) within the scope of the indemnification fund.

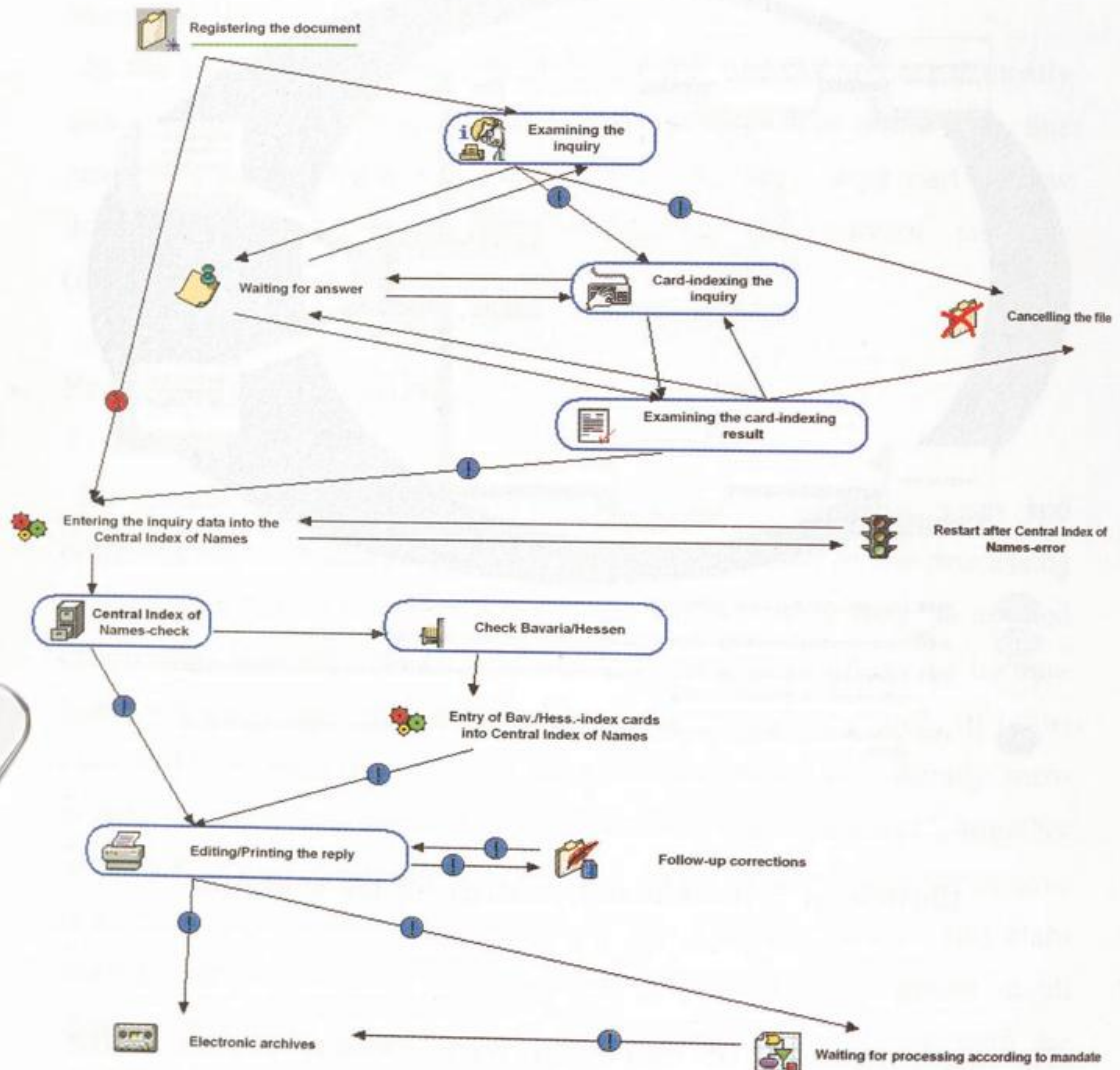


Illustration 8: Scheme of the routine of the Central Index of Names-processing

Routine activities are replaced – as far as possible – by automatically running program modules and the work of the users is even

further facilitated by means of help functions, e.g. the automatic call of database applications or the automatic display of input masks.

This way, processing and idle times of the inquiries are shortened substantially, the performance per caseworker is increased accordingly. Also the searching times are minimized, because every file may be recovered from authorized workstations at any time by means of its registration characteristics. Further advantages, like the improvement of the quality of the results by means of automatic plausibility checks or the possibility of responding to changes quickly on the basis of the statistical evaluations that are available anytime, may be added.

So far, the following processing routines have been taken over into actual operation:

1. Processing of list inquiries within the scope of the German indemnification fund (incoming/outgoing mail preferably on diskette)
2. Verification of data for the Federal Archives [commemorative book] (incoming/outgoing mail exclusively on diskette)
3. Processing of written individual inquiries within the scope of the German indemnification fund (including scanning of the inquiries and of possible follow-up mail)
4. Processing of incoming mail (scanning/registration) in respect of inquiries from the backlog (e.g. for an external translation)
5. Processing of cases supposed to be Meetings (i.e. cases that may be assigned positive automatically on the basis of the receipt of new personal documents without renewed inquiry) in respect of inquiries regarding the indemnification fund.
6. Certificates due to positive investigation results (cooperation network)

A survey of quantities regarding workflow processes established so far (dated January 2003) is given by the following table:

As to No.	Number of files
1	2,796 lists with altogether 580,015 inquiries
2	26 lists with altogether 12,913 personal data
3	73,182 persons in individual inquiries
4	47,703 inquiries
5	150,091 cases supposed to be Meetings
6	2,870 certificates

In the next implementation steps, the conventional work routines of the ITS – the short processing and the processing according to mandate – will be included in the workflow. The conceptional preparations for this have already progressed far. Also the technical implementation will proceed relatively speedily, because, thanks to the modular system design, a multitude of program modules may be taken over immediately or in a slightly changed form.

In spite of all the technical aid, the difficulties for the employees continue to exist in their original form. As before, it is still vital not only to draw up the greatest possible number of answers – presently, the ITS, receiving a maximum figure of incoming requests of more than 400,000, is issuing 4 replies every minute –, but also to render these positive, if possible at all.

Only thanks to the exact expert knowledge of the most various spellings of the names of persons and of places of persecution respectively employment of one and the same person, it is often possible to unmistakably clarify – of course, also by taking further identification features into consideration – cases of doubt. It is therefore

not seldom that one and the same persecutee appears in more than 20 different records and this often in the most various spellings. This applies to the first name as well as to the last name. As an example, the name Abramowitz shall be mentioned here, which the Central Index of Names may cite in 849 different versions.

Random selection of 40 variants of the name			
ABRAMOVITSCH (-WITZ)			
ABRAHAMOVIC	ABRAMAMOVITZ	ABRAMAOWIEZ	ABRAMOVICH
ABRAHAMOVIECH	ABRAMAMOWICOWA	ABRAMAOWITZA	ABRAMOVIECZ
ABRAHAMOVIG	ABRAMAMOWIESZ	ABRAMAVICOWA	ABRAMOVISZ
ABRAHAMOVITZI	ABRAMAMOWITS	ABRAMAVIESCH	ABRAMOVIZ
ABRAHAMOWICS	ABRAMAMOWIZEZ	ABRAMOVICH	ABRAMOWIECZ
ABRAHAMOWIESCH	ABRAMAOVIEC	ABRAMAVITZI	ABRAMOWISZ
ABRAHAMOWITCH	ABRAMAOVIEZ	ABRAMAWICA	ABRAMOWITZSCH
ABRAHAMOWITZEZ	ABRAMAOVITZA	ABRAMAWIECS	ABRANOVITCH
ABRAMAMOVIEC	ABRAMAOWICOWA	ABRAMAWISCH	ABRANOVIZEZ
ABRAMAMOVIEZ	ABRAMAWITZSCH	ABRANOVIESCH	AVRAMOWIES

Illustration 9: Examples of different spellings of one and the same name

This variety is based on the chronology of the events. While the first registration often had been made by German-speaking writers, this changed quickly in respect of the subsequent registrations, e.g. in the writing rooms of the concentration camps, where prisoners of the most different nationalities were assigned to work. It was thus not unusual that a French inmate had to register a Slavic name, the same as vice versa. As this happened according to the respective phonetic understanding, the multitude of variants may be explained without difficulty. If, immediately after the war, an employee of the Allies recorded the same person again in a DP-camp, a Johnny was easily to be found in a document instead of a Johann or Iwan.

The same difficulties are occurring again after all the years, because many inquirers for their part are now indicating the details of their

persecution incorrectly as well. Examples: In the course of the processing of the request, a spinning mill "Ravensberg" has turned out to concern a prisoner who had worked on spool machines in Concentration Camp "Ravensbrück". The village "Gogelfeld" in the district "Lekstenlager" has proved to be "Hohenfiert Lockstetter Lager" in Steinburg/Schleswig-Holstein, and the "Fabryce in Deskadef" is even referring to the "Stadt des KDF Wagen" = Wolfsburg.

Many solutions to these alphabetical-phonetic problems may be integrated, at least partly, in computer programs, in order to thereby give an essential help in the research. Since, however, not all the difficulties may be taken into account this way due to

- consciously given false personal data at the time for reasons of camouflage,
- name changes, e.g. due to marriage during or after the events themselves and
- name changes or adaptations after the emigration etc.,

the successful tracing service work will always remain to be the combination of both personal knowledge and technical aid.

List Processing and Cooperation Network for the Settlement of the German Fund "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future"

In spring 2001, the Federal Foundation in Berlin approved of the proposal of a further-reaching check in Germany made within the scope of a cooperation network between the Federal Archives, Koblenz, the Office for Information and Advice for Persecutees of National Socialism in Cologne and the ITS. By means of a joint procedure, the attempt is made to finally still conclude those requests, which have been answered negatively in Bad Arolsen in spite

of the most intensive efforts, positively after all thanks to the cooperation of the most various offices. The process is based on the un-bureaucratic list procedure, designed by the ITS especially for this purpose, which requires a minimum of information for a fast and likewise simplified answer.

Please fill in as completely as possible!

Data carrier no.: List no.:

Page number:

	1	2	3	4	5	6	power of attorney*	
serial no	last name	If applicable: name of birth Possibly cover name	first name	date of birth	place of birth	places of detention, stay or employment	prisoners numbers (if indicated)	(leave open for ITS) checking result: if positive: place and/or firm
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
6.								
7.								
8.								
9.								
10.								

List Processing
(last procedure in paper form or on data carriers)

Details under 1 and 2 are absolutely necessary. Also details under 3, if possible, but at least year of birth as well as 4. If these are unknown, please give details under 5 respectively 6.

* Power of attorney: Herewith we (the partner organization) assure you that we are in the possession of the original inquiry (with signature) and are authorized to accept the information for the persons named on the list. The reply serves exclusively humanitarian purposes, i.e. the assertion of the rights of this group of persons.

Illustration 10: List processing procedure

The combined efforts of the cooperation partners, the coordinating offices of the federal states and the involved third offices, like archives, firms etc., are as follows: The law for the establishment of the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" of August 2000 provides for applicants to have to definitely prove that they are entitled to receive a payment. In the same way, however, the partner organizations (POs) of the Federal Foundation have been

bound by means of respective agreements to actively support inquirers, who do not have their own documentary proof at disposal, in the provision of evidence. They are obliged to also accept applications without or only with incomplete documents and to first of all search for a proof in their own records from former indemnification proceedings respectively in archives of their countries. If a sufficient documentary evidence is not found this way, the partner organizations are compelled to inquire at the ITS. Here, the lists transmitted electronically by the POs are processed.

“In August 2001, the Federal Archives established in Cologne, at the Office for Information and Advice for Persecutees of National Socialism, with the financial support of the Federal Foundation, a distribution centre for taking over and sorting the inquiries not answered positively by the ITS – due to the lack of respective records – according to regional responsibility and for the respective transmission to the coordinating offices in the federal states. For this purpose, the POs of the Federal Foundation, the ITS, the distribution centre and the coordinating offices of the federal states were connected by means of a data system developed for this search for evidence. The coordinating offices of the federal states either process themselves the open requests for documentary proof forwarded to them or send them on to the respective archives on the spot. Only with the expert knowledge available there and with personal documentation that has not been checked so far, additional positive replies may be issued.

In agreement with the coordinating offices of the federal states, further offices (more than 200 up to now) may be connected to the data system in accordance with the determined data protection rules. Every office that has found a proof for an inquiry may either enter the information directly into the data network or inform the respective coordinating office, which then makes the respective entries. Investigations with a negative result are also registered in the

system. The responsible POs inform themselves about the investigation results by immediate access to the server"¹⁷.

This "standardized and uniform procedure" is supposed to help preventing double and triple investigations, which may again and again be noticed within the scope of the processing of inquiries in Bad Arolsen. In the interest of the fast processing of an as large number of requests as possible with limited resources at disposal, this procedure has clearly proved to be successful. At the ITS alone, capacities have been installed that guarantee, in case of a correct electronic receipt, a performance of up to 90,000 checks per month.

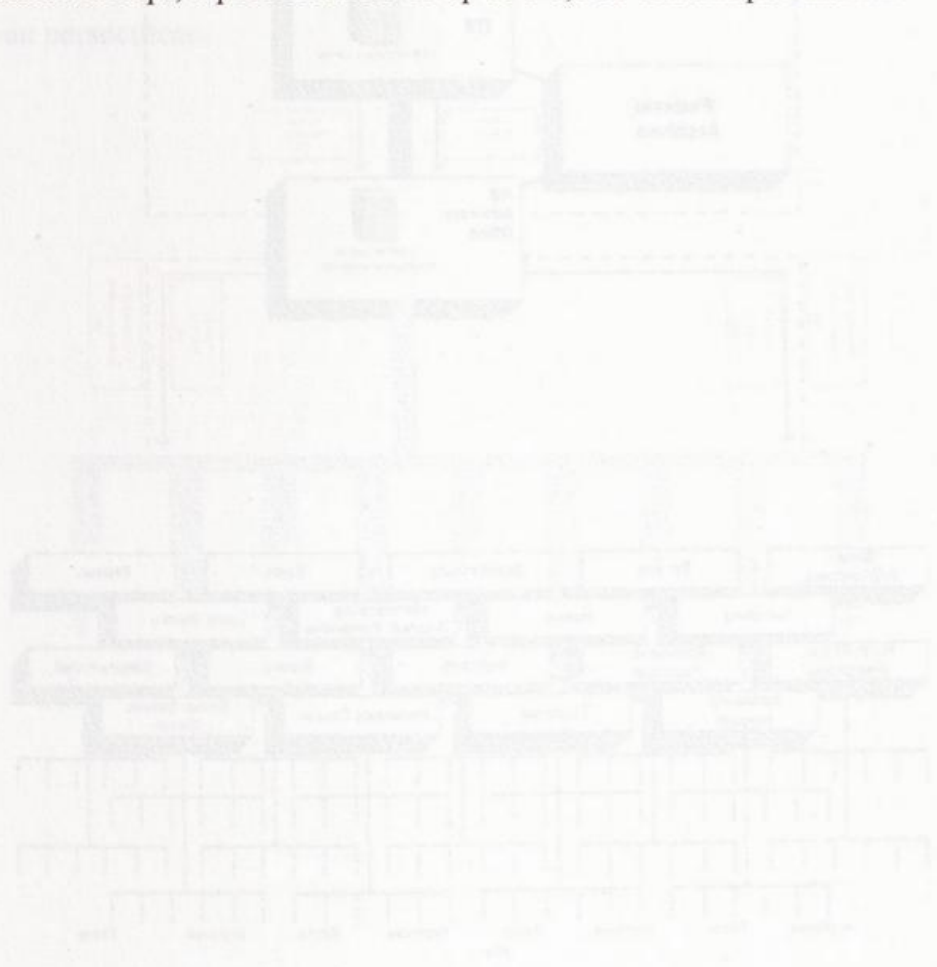


Illustration 11: Processing of the inquiries (exclusively in the form) within the scope of the cooperation network.

System of the provision of evidence

List processing (A) and processing of special cases resp. renewed inquiries for additional information (B)

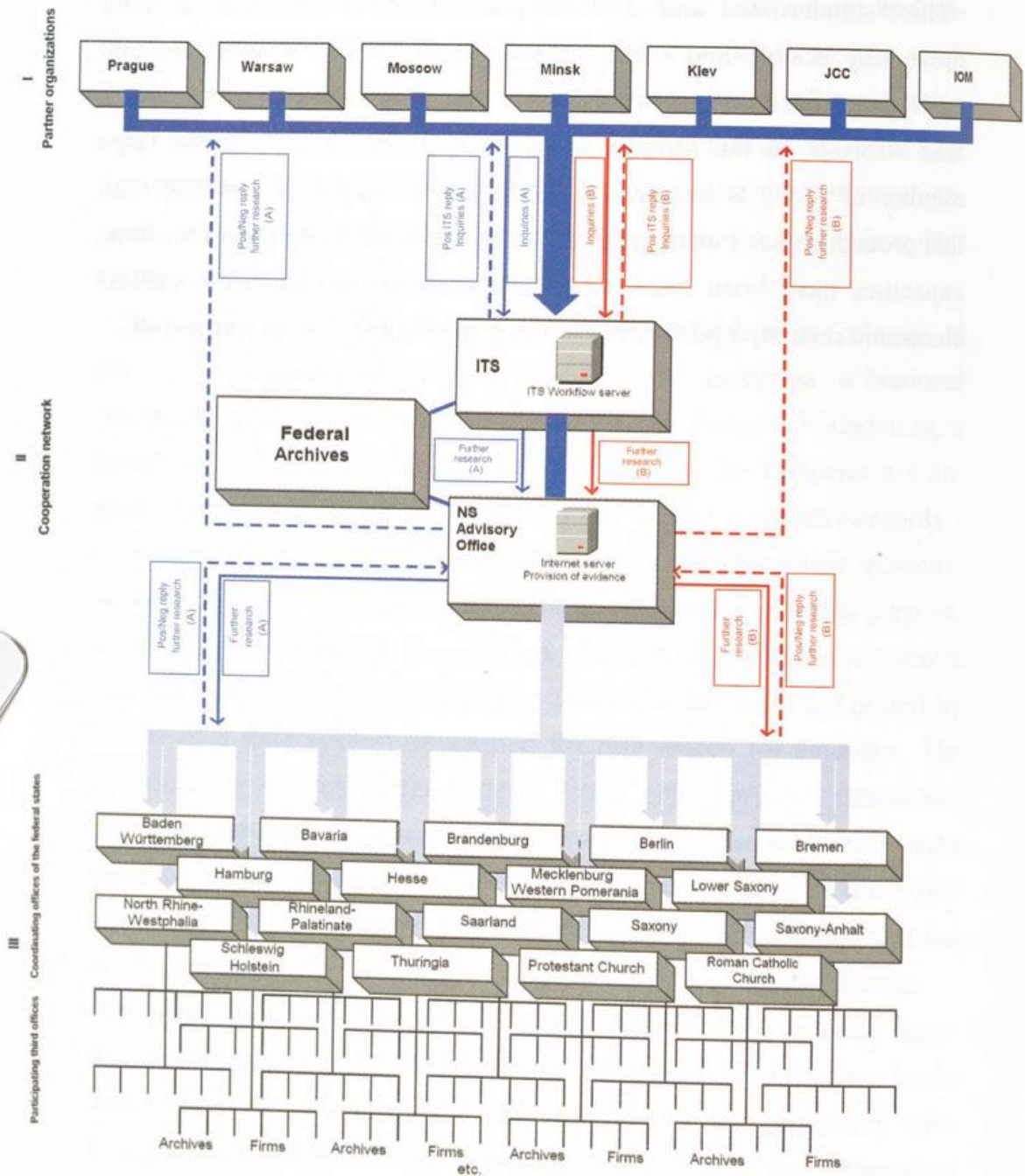


Illustration 11: Processing of the inquiries (exclusively in list form) within the scope of the cooperation network

For this reason, the ITS transfers all directly arriving inquiries that evidently refer to the Foundation Law, but that may not be unmistakably assigned to a PO, into the list procedure. This guarantees the processing in Bad Arolsen within a period of two months and the additional investigations through the cooperation network.

The checks of the cooperation network are carried out automatically for all inquiries that arrive at the ITS within the scope of the list procedure. This irrespective of whether they belong to the sphere of competence of the German Foundation Law, the Austrian Reconciliation Fund or any other indemnification procedure for former civilian persecutees.