

## A Focus on Tracing Children and Adolescents

In 1945 the Allies liberated thousands of unaccompanied minors from concentration camps and from forced labor.

They also found many children stolen from their parents and given to German families for adoption.

For this reason, a special focus was placed on the tracing of children and adolescents from UN states after the war.

The ITS set up a special *Child Search Branch* in 1948, based first in Esslingen and then in Arolsen from 1950.

The *Child Search Branch* had two main responsibilities:

It searched for children reported missing by their families, and it traced and registered unaccompanied children in order to then search for their parents or relatives.

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Pirecnik, Paula, gospodinja  
 Čistočuf, Ačkariča ul. št. 4.

Štitočuf dne 15. II. 1949.

Predmet: Iščaja za svojega sina  
 Pirecnik, Ivana iz Trnave

Čarofrema ljudskemu delu  
 pomagajte da se skelato in edarstie.

Kozirje.

Iščajana Pirecnik, Paula, gospodinja Stanjaja  
 v Štitočufu, Ačkariča ul. št. 4. prošim gnanj nastor da izpolnauje  
 mi naim konzulatu, da se mi vime moj sin Pirecnik Ivan  
 rojen 4. II. 1921. v Štitočufu, kateri je bil interniran od strani  
 Nemcev tu se vedaj nahaja v Trnavi, trajnega nastora ni imel.  
 Prošo prošjo ztemeljufen slediti:

Gne 4. avgusta 1945 sem bila od strani Gestapa  
 aretirana tu odpeljana v svojima otrokoma Lariji in Traum  
 v Celje, kjer je se mi dva dni kasneje Temci Otoka odzeli  
 tu odpeljali v Lindenberg - Frenkleton tu vedaj ni več mi,  
 čeje ki se nahajal. Laska Larija, katere je stara 19 let se je  
 vrnila po vrstolostni domov, doim tu sina Trauma ni sem  
 tu mi da njim mikajufje sleda.

Iščajam, da si iz vraga sem želim potratiti  
 mojega sina, da katerega tem skelato, tu ga vrgajala v ruku  
 naim nime dizarje, v znanega dizarjama FLR?

Prošjona nufjeji, naprosim nastor, da se moji prošji  
 zgoditi tu se stari potratiti kmaku, da vize redni otrokoga bratstva,  
 tu da se isti nato vime mimi.

Imat tuijje... svetelo naroda!

**Tracing Inquiry from Paula Pirecnik for her Son  
 Ivan, February 15, 1949**

In 1945 Paula Pirecnik began looking for her son, whom the Germans had taken in 1942 and given up for adoption. The scale of these abductions did not become clear until 1947 through the trials of high-ranking SS men. This intensified the search for children. To this day there are victims of the Nazis who know nothing about their origins.



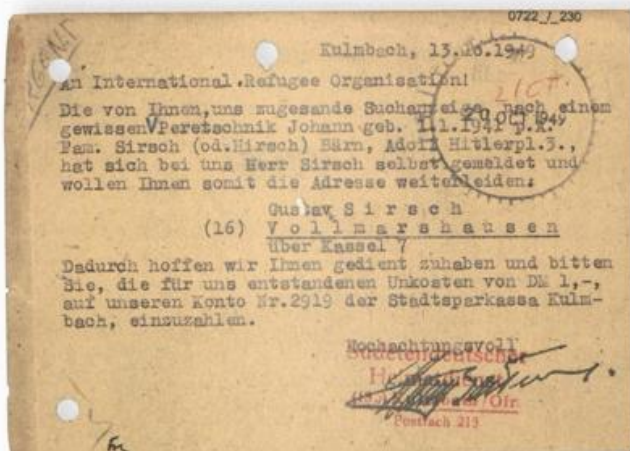
**Child Search Branch Employees in the New Offices in Arolsen, 1952**

In autumn 1950 the *Child Search Branch* moved from Esslingen into the former SS barracks in Arolsen. The bottom photo shows the reference card for Ivan Pirecnik. In addition to the *Central Name Index*, there was a special *Child Search Index* for children and adolescents.



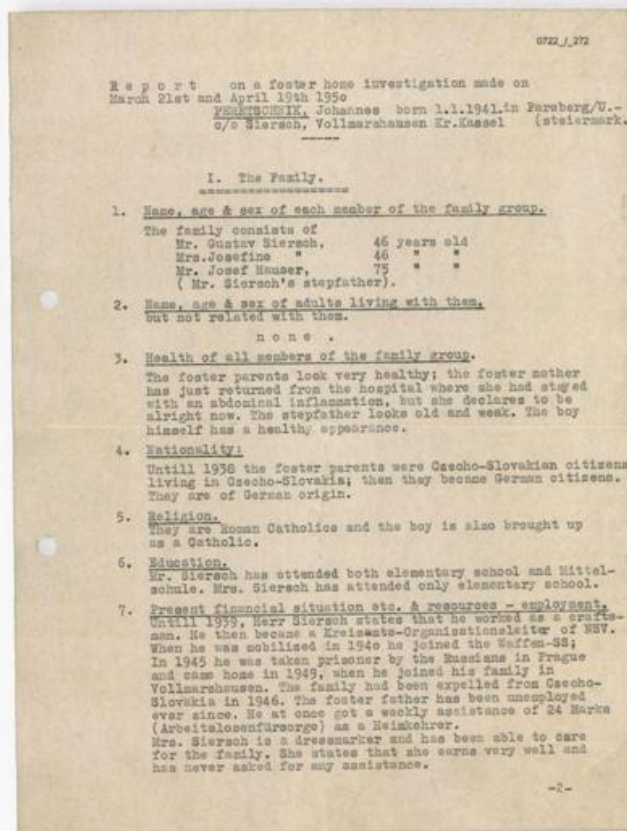
**Reference Card from the *Child Search Index* for Johann Peretschnik (Ivan Pirecnik), circa 1952**

The data on the card was continually updated. Most of the information is about Ivan's whereabouts, which were only discovered during the search. Ivan was first taken to a "Lebensborn" home, from where abducted children were handed over to German families. This is how Ivan was placed with the Sirsch family.



**Information from the Sudetendeutscher Heimatdienst  
Regarding Ivan Pircnik's Location, October 13, 1949**

At first there were few clues about Ivan's location. The *Sudetendeutscher Heimatdienst* published a search appeal and found out that the boy was living in Vollmarshausen near Kassel. If the ITS had little information, it would contact youth welfare offices, local authorities, other tracing services or newspapers.



**Excerpt from Carla Hansen's Report on Ivan's  
Living Situation, March 21 to April 19, 1950**

Carla Hansen, the IRO Child Care Officer who visited Ivan, reported that he was doing well in his foster family. She also provided information about the family's background. The *Child Search Branch* worked closely with other IRO offices to find and question unaccompanied children.

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Murrenfeld, den 12. Oktober 1949  
S.F. 64.376 S.P.M. 307

740/178/CBR/1000/77

An den Herrn MINISTER  
DAS MINISTERIUM DES INNEN  
Land: WÜRTTEMBERG/HOENZOLLERN  
F R A N K R E I C H

Herr Minister,

Ich beehre mich hiermit Ihnen zur Kenntnis zu bringen, dass die Suche nach verschleppten Kindern, die von dem Internationalen Rotkreuz durchgeführt wird und an der die Beteiligung des Hohen Kommissars der Französischen Republik vorliegt, eine neue Phase der Arbeit bedingt und zwar die der Einholung fehlender amtlicher Daten.

Es wird beabsichtigt von den Ständekämtern ergänzende amtliche Angaben anzufordern, die uns die Jugendämter, bzw. Schulleitungen auf Grund der Ihnen vom Suchdienst zugeleiteten Formblätter nicht geben konnten.

Eine möglichst konkrete Feststellung der Staatsangehörigkeit eines Kindes erfordert als Unterlage möglichst genaue amtliche Daten; bei der Durchprüfung der eingegangenen Formblätter hat es sich erwiesen, dass bei einem grossen Teil der Fälle, ungefähr 1400 für die Französischen Kinder, diese genaue Angaben fehlen.

Da diesen Zustände abschelfen, beabsichtigen wir uns an die Ständekämter mit einem entsprechenden Fragebogen, laut beiliegendem Muster, zu wenden und die fehlenden Daten anzufordern.

Wir erlauben uns gleichzeitig an Sie mit d. r. hoflichen Bitte heranzutreten uns Ihre Unterstützung und Hilfe zu gewähren, damit die vorgeschriebenen Termine von den Ständekämtern eingehalten werden.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

Jane S A R R I N S  
Le Chef de la Section Enfance  
du Service International de  
Recherches pour la Zone Fran-  
caise d'Occupation

1 Anlagen

**Systematic Registration of Children in  
Württemberg-Hohenzollern (French Zone), October 12, 1949**

In October 1948, the *Child Search Branch* adopted a *Limited Registration Plan*. Ministries and agencies in the western occupation zones were asked to compile lists of all foster children, children in state or private facilities and those who had been adopted after the start of the war.

**WÜRTTEMBERG**

Cercle : RAVENSBURG  
Commune: BODNEGG

- Pflegekinder, die in einer fremden Familie untergebracht sind  
- Enfants en garde

No	Nom et prénom des enfants	Date et lieu de naissance	Nom et adresse des parents	Nom et adresse des gardes	Observations
✓ 46	BUCHER Bruna	8-3-35 a Ravensburg	unbekannt	Fischer Martin Kriegel Frida Eckenberg-Bodnegg	
✓ 47	KLEBER Johann	24-3-34 a +	Elbers Johann Koenig-Kellig- Neuen	Wolfe Ludwig Kuhn Josefine Hinterreute- all Bodnegg	Über 14 Jahre
✓ 48	FÜSSINGER Michael	1-10-39 a	Füßinger Josef Althausen, Feyersand Maria gestorben	Füßinger Anton Weiss Josefa Aigen-Bodnegg	
✓ 49	GÖPPEL Franz	23-7-36 a Memmingen	Göppel Hans u. Paula, Memmingen	Göppel Franz Zwiler Anna Lachen-Bodnegg	
50	WANG Kurt	6-3-36 a	unbekannt	Bentle Josef Sinn Barbara U.Wagenbach- Bodnegg	
✓ 51	MARSHALL Josefine	16-2-35 a Hörschingen	Marshall Je- serline, Wehnart unbekannt	Fuchs Josef Spahn Paulina Hochstett-Bodnegg	Über 14 Jahre alt
✓ 52	NICOLAI Helmut	19-6-37 a	Nicolai Käthe Stuttgart	Geebe Nicolai Eugenbühl Bodnegg	
✓ 53	PILSL Georg	16-8-32 a +	Recht Georg Kammerhof- Bodnegg	Klingl Reinhard Recht Josefine Kammerhof Bodnegg	Über 14 Jahre alt
✓ 54	STAUDACHER Therese	11-8-37 a Ravensburg	Staudacher Jo- hannes, Har- garten-Bodnegg Wolter Amalie	Pfeffer Johann Gutekunst Elisabeth O. Wagenbach Bodnegg	
✓ 55	WOJAN Helmut	12-2-32 a +	Wojan Julius + Klara, Lever- kuzen Kra.Köln	Mayenberger Bernh. Reumann Theresia Hochstett Bodnegg alt	Über 7 Jahre
✓ 56	BEREZNIAK Josef	14-8-44 a Gutmannshaf Ukraine	Berezniak An- tonia, Mehrhaus Bodnegg	Pfeffer Johann Gutekunst Elisabeth O. Wagenbach Bodnegg	
✓ 57	BRUGGER Alfons	18-2-46 a Sigmaringen	unbekannt	Hügler Justin Hanser Anna Leupen-Bodnegg	

**List of all Foster Children in Bodnegg in the  
Ravensburg District, 1949**

Authorities listed all foster children regardless of their background. Children of non-German origin were then checked and registered by the *Child Search Branch*. One of these children was Josef Berezniak, listed here as number 56.



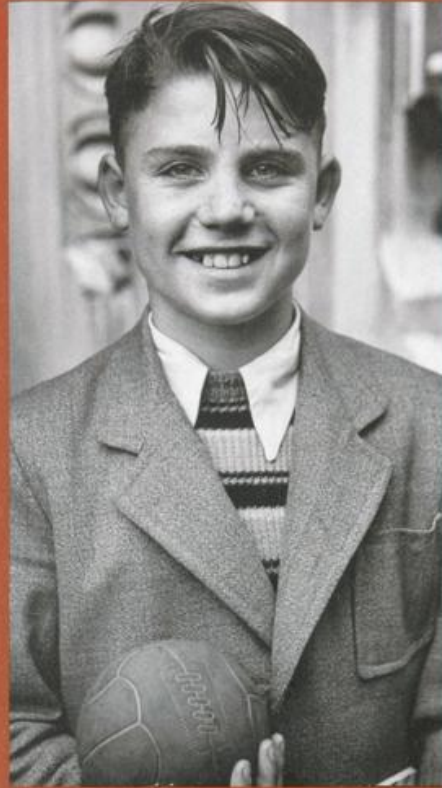
# Ivan Pirecnik

1941 - 1995

Ivan Pirecnik's mother spent over four years tracing her son, who had been violently taken from her by the Germans in 1942. He was from Šoštanj in what was then Yugoslavia (now Slovenia). When the Germans and their allies occupied the region in 1941, they shot Ivan's father because he was with the resistance. They gave Ivan up for adoption without his mother's knowledge. In July 1943 he was given to the Sirsch family and named Dieter. Nine years later he finally returned to his mother in Yugoslavia, where he finished school and worked in a power plant.

**Ivan with his German Foster Parents outside a US Courthouse in Frankfurt am Main, 1952**

After the lengthy search, Ivan's future was uncertain at first. Should he return to Yugoslavia or remain in Germany? Judges first ruled that he should stay with the Sirsch family. After successful protests by his biological mother, Paula Pirecnik, the judges revised their decision and granted her custody of Ivan.



Ivan Pirecnik, 1952



**Ivan with his Mother, shortly before Leaving for Šoštanj, in a Frankfurt Hotel Room, 1952**

Ivan Pirecnik was about one and a half when the Germans separated him from his mother. His mother and sister survived concentration camps and forced labor. When Ivan was reunited with his mother in 1952, he spoke no Yugoslavian and had no memory of his life in Šoštanj.



**Ivan (3rd from left) with his Former Foster Parents, probably in Vollmarshausen, circa 1985**

After returning to Yugoslavia, Ivan initially had no contact with the Sirsch family. He quickly formed a good relationship with his biological mother and sister. He first wrote to the Sirsch family as an adult and visited them in the 1980s.