

ALLIED HIGH COMMISSION  
FOR GERMANY  
INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE



# Who Were and Are the Employees?

The staff expanded rapidly in the early years, growing from 80 people in 1945 to 1,758 four years later. The first employees came from 21 countries. They included Allied military and civilian personnel, DPs and Germans, some of whom had been SS or Nazi Party members. At the start, the staff was insufficiently trained. Employees often lacked historical knowledge and archival skills. At the same time, the language skills of DPs were very helpful. However, by the mid-1950s most DPs had left Arolsen. Their positions were filled by locals from within the region, many of whom joined the ITS from other professions. With the ITS turning into an archive and information center, recent years have seen the arrival of new employees with a specific training background for these new activities.



Employees in Front of the ITS Headquarters, on the  
Grounds of the Former SS Barracks, Arolsen, 1952

# Alexander Kopaniak

## 1915 - 1986

Alexander Kopaniak was a former Polish prisoner of war and one of the first employees of the *Central Tracing Bureau*. His Polish, German, English and French language skills initially earned him a position as a clerk in 1946. "Because on his experience of living in a prisoner of war camp, working in tracing was very important to him," as his wife, Johanna Kopaniak, put it. The couple had met each other through work, where she was one of the first German employees. Kopaniak did not want to return to Poland and stayed in Arolsen. There, he worked at the ITS until he retired in 1980.

1946



Alexander Kopaniak (center) with Staff of the *Wartime Documents Section*, Arolsen, circa 1972

Alexander Kopaniak was in charge of the *Wartime Documents Section* for some time and took over the *Postwar Documents Section* in 1978.

# Erich Henschel

## 1921-2007

Henschel was a trained graphic artist and classic career-changer. Though not a specialist, he eventually led various departments. He studied graphic design in Berlin and loved photography. After graduating he was drafted into the German army, where he was retrained as a cartographer.

In 1947, these skills probably helped him secure a job at the *Central Tracing Bureau*, predecessor of the ITS. There he was tasked to draw numerous maps and charts, including those showing the sites of concentration camps, which the employees needed for their daily work.



1947

Henschel (Standing, r.) in the Concentration Camp Documents Section, Arolsen, c. 1972

Erich Henschel worked at the ITS from 1947 until retiring in 1986. From 1980 to 1986 he was head of the Concentration Camp Documents Section.

# Józef Żyłka

## 1910 - 1953

Józef Żyłka was one of more than 500 Displaced Persons who shaped the first phase of the *International Tracing Service*. He had been deported from Poland in 1940 for forced labor. After liberation he and his family arrived in Arolsen in 1948. He was initially employed in the DP Training School, an educational facility for DPs housed in the former SS barracks. When it closed in the spring of 1949, he moved on to the ITS, where he last worked in transportation for the administration. In April 1952 he and his family emigrated to the USA.



1949

The Żyłka Family in Bremerhaven, shortly before Emigrating, April 2, 1952

The Żyłkas were among the last DPs allowed to emigrate to the USA under the "DP Act". Their last name started with Z, so they boarded the ship last. Newspapers therefore referred to Józef Żyłka as the "last European refugee." Upon arrival, US President Truman greeted the family at the White House.

**1949****ITS News Bulletin Number 2, March 10, 1949**

In 1949 and 1950 the ITS published a staff newsletter. A total of 14 issues published in English have been preserved. They give an impression of the multi-national background of the first ITS employees and provide an insight into their life and work.

No.	Name	Sex	Nationality	Birth Date	Age	Birth Place & Country	I.D. No.	Remarks
337.	WORY Henry	✓ M	Polish	21.7.1911	3	Leimfeld, Germany	653390	
338.	WORY Gertruda	✓ F	Polish	16.3.1916	3	Berlich, Germany	563389	
339.	WYKUCHOWSKI Danuta-Irena	✓ F	Polish	8.1.1918	2	Wildflecken, Germany	866403	
<del>340.</del>	<del>WYKUCHOWSKI Helena</del>	<del>✓ F</del>	<del>Polish</del>	<del>27.3.1926</del>	<del>23</del>	<del>Janow, Poland</del>	<del>599680</del>	<del>16.4.50 to USA</del>
341.	ZARONKO Danna	✓ M	Ukrainian	30.5.1895	54	Katerinoslav, Russia	568901	
342.	ZALUSKI Danna	✓ M	Polish	18.7.1914	35	Deblin, Poland	569001	
343.	ZALOGA Cecylia	✓ M	Polish	15.4.1913	36	Cosialkow, Poland	568819	
<del>344.</del>	<del>ZARNOJ Tatjana</del>	<del>F</del>	<del>Latvian</del>	<del>4.11.1921</del>	<del>28</del>	<del>Odesa, Russia</del>	<del>565681</del>	
345.	ZARNOJ Dario	✓ M	Ukrainian	10.8.1904	45	Trifunshka, Russia	562902	116 Gray-Brown
<del>347.</del>	<del>ZELI Josef</del>	<del>M</del>	<del>Polish</del>	<del>3.1.1910</del>	<del>40</del>	<del>Schrapowice, Poland</del>	<del>502158</del>	
348.	ZELI Ursula	✓ F	Polish	25.3.1915	34	Berlin, Germany	536298	
349.	ZELKA Ursula	✓ F	Polish	29.1.1914	6	Torw, Germany	53.608	
350.	ZELKA Beata	✓ F	Polish	12.6.1918	1	Berlin, Germany	536296	
351.	ZWINGHER Johana	✓ M	Latvian	31.5.1892	57	Aistruakle, Latvia	793305	
352.	ZWINGHER Karla	✓ M	Latvian	13.1.1923	26	Kalnampi, Latvia	793633	
<del>353.</del>	<del>ZWINGHER Inesa</del>	<del>F</del>	<del>Latvian</del>	<del>23.11.1927</del>	<del>2</del>	<del>Briegau, Germany</del>	<del>793663</del>	<del>18.4.50 to USA</del>
<del>354.</del>	<del>ZARNOJ Danna</del>	<del>F</del>	<del>Polish</del>	<del>18.8.1901</del>	<del>48</del>	<del>Wola Oleszka, Poland</del>	<del>568850</del>	<del>to USA - 30.1.50</del>
<del>355.</del>	<del>ZARNOJ Danna</del>	<del>F</del>	<del>Polish</del>	<del>18.3.1911</del>	<del>8</del>	<del>Pommern, Germany</del>	<del>562852</del>	
356.	ZARNOJ Ina	✓ M	Ukrainian	25.11.1909	0	Arolsen, Germany	542163	No signature
<del>357.</del>	<del>ZELI Josef</del>	<del>M</del>	<del>Polish</del>	<del>16.4.1907</del>	<del>40</del>	<del>Talica, Poland</del>	<del>542163</del>	
358.	ZARNOJ Stefan	✓ M	Ukrainian	1.5.1917	32	Deblin, Poland	554293	

1950

Excerpt from a List of Employees Housed in  
the Arolsen DP Camp, 1950

The names crossed out are those of DP employees  
who left around 1950 because they emigrated or  
returned to their countries of origin.

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35

1. Employment practices:

a) The Germans, if left alone, would tend to reemploy unreliable elements. About 45 top Nazis (including SS leaders, Gestapomen and Golden badge-party members) and about 5 Communists were recently removed, after having been employed under IRO supervision for several years. The international IRO personnel, unaware of Denazification laws and procedures, did not care. The Board was strongly opposed by the German manager and other Germans in removing those elements.

b) Old trusted DP employees would be gradually pushed out and replaced by Germans. When I became aware of this tendency, I reserved my right of supervision on every personnel action.

2. Security of records:

a) It was noted that under IRO management employees who wanted to "fill their insertion quota" on Index cards sometimes disposed of the remaining cards in their hands by flushing them down the toilets at the end of the working day. On October 1, 1951, Circular ITS/STEC/CIRC(51)7, (Exh.1) was issued which is self-explanatory. Such practices may reappear if the ITS is left without proper supervision.

b) On November 6, a fire broke out in a ITS block through burning cigaret butts in a wastepaper basket. It was quickly discovered and put out. The responsible persons were disciplined (Exh.2). Through a check with the Berlin Documents Center it was discovered that the main culprit was an old Party member with an impressive SS record. (Exh.3). He was quietly removed by "reduction of force" at the end of 1951.

From above instances it appears necessary that the security of records will require also in the future permanent Allied supervision.

3. Correspondence with Allied Countries, Agencies and Nationals:

Constant supervision of such reports is required. The reaction to incorrect outgoing ITS reports is evident from the example of one Otto GROSSMAN of L.I., N.Y. (Exh. 4). Copy of my reply was transmitted to Mr. Lawrence for DP Division files. Correspondence procedures in English and French as to contents and form have to be constantly reviewed by me. In 1951 a HICOG correspondence procedure course at the ITS had good results which due to fluctuation of personnel, however, must be maintained. Reports to CIC, U.S. and Allied Consulates, Overseas Mission of U.S. Department of Justice, certain Red Cross Missions and Jewish agencies need individual attention and cannot be handled by a German manager.

It is doubtful

1952

Excerpt from a Memorandum by Hugh G. Elbot,  
Chairman of the ITS Administration, February 6, 1952

Elbot firmly rejected the idea of handing over the ITS to the Germans. He feared that old Nazis would be hired, was concerned about the security of the documents and wanted to ensure access to the archives for US intelligence. From 1952 the staff was regularly screened, and at least 45 people were dismissed, usually due to prior SS membership.

# Margret Schlenke

\* 1952

"The work I do here can only be learned through practice," Margret Schlenke concluded after over 47 years of work at the ITS. A local resident, she joined the ITS upon leaving school in 1970. Colleagues who were former DPs introduced her to the job. She took over the *Child Search Archive* in 1976 and also the *Tracing Department* nine years later. For decades, Margret Schlenke continually reassembled the puzzle pieces involved in the search for individuals. She was in contact with Red Cross offices, authorities and archives all over the world, as well as survivors and their families.



1970

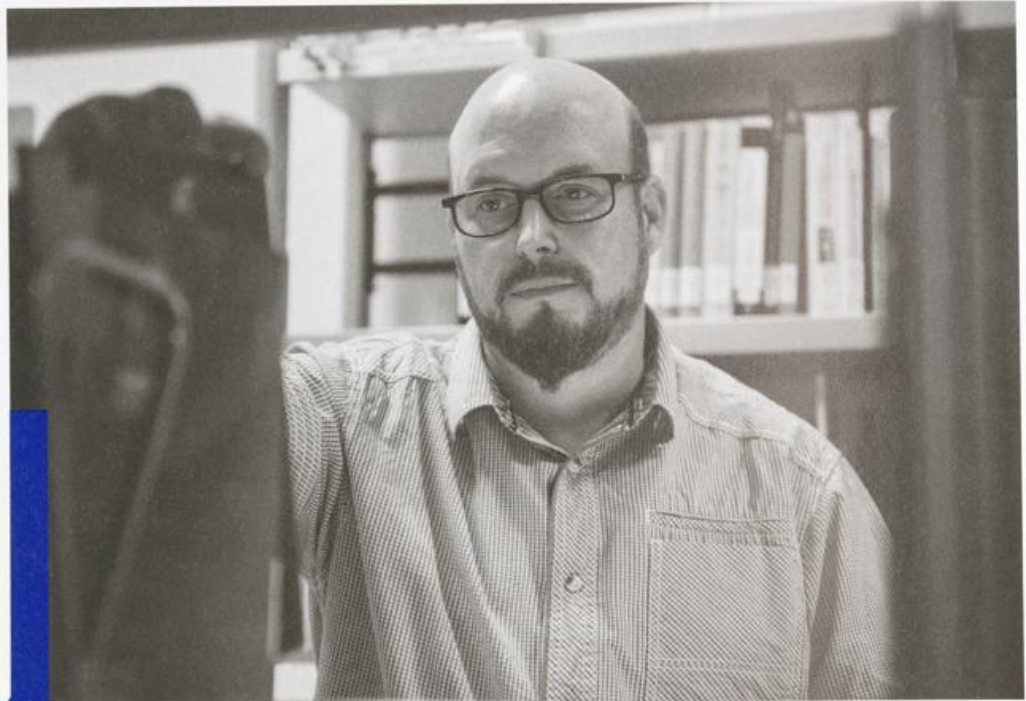
Margret Schlenke with Folke Heinecke, Tracing his Family History, Bad Arolsen, 2007

Margret Schlenke spent decades helping survivors and family members search for relatives and clarify their fate. Folke Heinecke was born as Aleksander Litau in Crimea. The Germans deported him and gave him up for adoption to a German family. He has been tracing his origins since his adoptive parents died.

# Jens Paul

\* 1975

When Jens Paul joined the ITS in 1996 as a so-called *list-checker*, he had no idea what area he would be working in 20 years later. He started out reviewing lists of former foreign forced laborers in the context of pension or compensation proceedings. Parallel to this, he visited various German archives and microfilmed documents about former victims of Nazi persecution. Since 2007 he has been a staff member of the ITS library, where he assists colleagues and visitors with an interest in specialist books on Nazi persecution.



1996

Jens Paul in the Library of the *Arolsen Archives*,  
Bad Arolsen, August 21, 2018

Today the scope of Jens Paul's work is manifold. In addition to advising users, he catalogs books and journals and indexes them through keywords.

# Christiane Weber

\* 1984

"It's unbelievable what you can find out about someone's fate from index cards and forms if you just have the right knowledge about their context," says employee Christiane Weber, whose job it is to make historical documents and texts understandable. She studied history and German and English studies in Gießen, employed at the *Arbeitsstelle Holocaustliteratur* for a few years. After that, she worked as an editor for an academic publisher. At the *Arolsen Archives* she worked on the e-Guide, an online tool that provides extensive background information on the documents found in the archival collections.



2017

## Christiane Weber Talks About Working with Historical Documents at a Workshop, 2018

Research associates at the *Arolsen Archives* participate in international workshops and conferences. They explain the potential for research and education that lies within the collections stored in the *Arolsen Archives*.



2018

Employees behind the Main Building,  
Bad Arolsen, August 29, 2018

