




ITS
International Tracing Service
Service International de Recherches
Internationaler Suchdienst

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Farewell Reception
of the ICRC
29 November 2012



*Reception by the President of the
International Committee of the
Red Cross in Bad Arolsen*



Musical interlude: Arolser Stadtstreicher (Christian Rauch School):
Oliver Mathes, violin | Adele Jakumeit, violin | David Schult, violoncello |
Tabea Knobbe, violin | Rainer Böttcher, piano

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"A well recognized institution"

Jean-Luc Blondel, Director of the International Tracing Service (ITS), Bad Arolsen

When the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) was entrusted with the management and the administration of the International Tracing Service all parties concerned were then considering a five year responsibility. It was in 1955. Fifty-seven years later, the ITS is still active. Even more, it is a well recognized institution whose mandate was recently confirmed and extended by the International Commission for the ITS.



COMITÉ INTERNATIONAL
DE LA
CROIX-ROUGE

Genève,
No 16.7'

leur l'Ambassadeur,

En l'absence
ident du Comité international
s l'honneur d'accuser réception
avez bien voulu transmettre
texte définitif du Règlement
nationale pour le S.I.R.

Handwritten text in German:
Ausdrucks des Herrn Bundespräsidenten
aus Anlaß der Unterzeichnung
Vereinbarungen über den
Suchdienst.
Exzellenz,
Ich darf meiner aufrichtigen
Ausdruck verleihen, daß es in freudiger
Zusammenarbeit gelungen ist, die mit
der Arbeiten des Internationalen Such-
diensten Fragen in einer für alle Be-
denstellenden Weise zu lösen. Die Unter-
Internationalen Suchdienstes geben Aus-
leidvolle und schmerzliche Vergangenheit
uns, stets der Opfer dieser unheilvollen
ken. Wir wissen, daß sich in Deutschland
Reihe von anderen Ländern eine große Zahl
schmerzlich an das ihnen und ihren Angehörigen
Leid erinnern und die Tätigkeit des Intern-
Suchdienstes mit regem Interesse verfolgen.
der Verwaltung des Internationalen Suchdienstes
Internationale Komitee...

This evolution is indeed no surprise. Although reduced in comparison with the first years the task of tracing people remains, as the name of the institution clearly indicates. While adding new tasks to the initial mandate of the ITS, the International Commission has maintained the central concern of the ITS: the civil victims of the national socialist regime.

The search for missing persons, subsequent family reunification, the clarification of fates, the historical research and the preparation of educational materials referring to the persons who had suffered under this regime are all complementary aspects of this sole concern.



Jean-Luc Blondel,
Director of the ITS and
ICRC delegate.

Picture to the left: Letter of the ICRC accepting the management of the ITS and speech by Adenauer on the occasion of the signing ceremony of the Bonn treaties in 1955.



As it withdraws from the direction of the International Tracing Service, the ICRC thus leaves an institution offering many services to the survivors of the Second World War and their families, the research community, educational institutions and – more generally – to all interested publics.

This brochure presents the reflections of the personalities speaking at the farewell ceremony of 29 November 2012 and simultaneously offers a broader view on the main activities of the ITS as they have developed over the years and will continue in the near future under a new leadership.

“Respect for the past and responsibility toward the future”

Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Geneva

“I should appreciate it if the International Committee of the Red Cross would declare its willingness to assume the management and administration of the International Tracing Service.” This invitation by the German Chancellor and Foreign Minister Konrad Adenauer was the result of a five-year long discussion between the Allies and the Federal Republic of Germany as well as between the states involved and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This request, formulated in a letter of June 6, 1955 and addressed to the President of the ICRC, Paul Rügger, must be

“I should appreciate it if the International Committee of the Red Cross would declare its willingness to assume the management and administration of the International Tracing Service.”

placed in the context of the political evolution of the era: On May 5, 1955, the occupation of the Federal Republic of Germany ended, and with it the Allied High Commission for Germany disappeared, which hitherto had supervised the work of the International Tracing Service. Parallel to the agreement appointing the ICRC to manage an institution which was believed to be temporary, the agreement appointing the International Commission for the International Tracing Service (ITS) took force, one of the very first



Peter Maurer, President of the ICRC.

treaties to be signed by Germany as a new sovereign state. This Commission, initially formed by nine states, is now composed of eleven states.

The letter by the German Chancellor, which had been prepared in close cooperation with the Allies, likewise stipulated that the continuation of the activities of the ITS should be carried out "in the spirit of the Geneva Convention of 1949". In another message it was

Präsidenten des Internationalen Komitees vom Roten Kreuz
Minister a.D. Dr. Paul Ruegger

Präsident,

Die Bundesrepublik Deutschland hat sich in dem zwischen Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Französischen Republik, Vereinigten Königreich von Grossbritannien und Nordirland und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika geschlossenen Vertrag über die Beendigung des Besatzungsregimes in Deutschland (in dem die Besatzungsregeln für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland geändert sind), Sieben- und Artikel 1 d, verpflichtet, "die Fortführung der Suchdienstleistungen zu gewährleisten, die gegenwärtig vom Internationalen Suchdienst durchgeführt werden". Der Internationale Suchdienst ist errichtet worden, um Vermisste zu suchen und Unterlagen über Deutsche und Nichtdeutsche, die in nationalsozialistischen Konzentrations- oder Arbeitslagern gefangen wurden, oder über Nichtdeutsche, die infolge des Zweiten Weltkrieges verschleppt worden sind, zu sammeln, zu bewahren und Regierungen und interessierten Personen zugänglich zu machen. Die Verantwortung für die Tätigkeit des Internationalen Suchdienstes, die früher von der ICRH und der Internationalen Flüchtlingsorganisation übernommen wurde, ist später von der Alliierten Hohen Kommission für Deutschland übernommen worden.

Die Regierungen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, der Französischen Republik, des Vereinigten Königreichs von Grossbritannien und Nordirland...

DER BUNDEKANTZLER
UND
BUNDEMINISTER DES AUSWÄRTIGEN

June 6, 1955: Letter by German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to the ICRC. The five pages explain the benchmarks for the administration and management of the ITS.

Herr Präsident,
Die Bundesrepublik
der Bundesrepublik
dem Vereinigten
und den Vereini-
zur Rep...

likewise stipulated that the ICRC should take on this management activity, applying the principles of neutrality and impartiality and independence. How was the "spirit of the Geneva Convention" to be understood? I note that it specifies the Convention of 1949, that is, the humanitarian treaties updated and completed after and with the perspective of the experience in World War II. This is the case especially with the Fourth Convention, the terms of which were cruelly lacking during the war, the terms intended to protect



The following press release comes from the International Tracing Service

INTERNATIONAL TRACING SERVICE

"The Federal Chancellor, the International Committee of the Red Cross and other representatives of power have agreed to transfer the International Tracing Service to the German government, thus transferring the responsibility for the International Tracing Service to the German government of the Red Cross for

civilians in the hands of the enemy or in the territories under military occupation. This development of human rights is important. We are aware that rights are far from ever being duly respected. But the absence of rights is worse still. Sadly, this was evinced in World War II among other conflicts.

It is indeed the civilians, the victims of multiple persecutions of all kinds, who are the focus of the action of the International Tracing Service. Foremost at the centre of its archives, millions of documents stored, received or acquired in Bad Arolsen over the years bear witness to oppression, injustice and suffering of prisoners, of forced labour, displaced persons, separated families, stolen childhoods. Behind the documents there is the person, each individual, each family, who is the centre of activities of an institution such as the ITS, following the example of the ICRC which managed it for 57 years. It is here that the "spirit of the Convention" can be found, the humanitarian spirit, to wit (I quote a passage from the Commentary of the First Geneva Convention) an attitude that regards the fate of man solely on the basis of his quality of being human, and not on the basis of the value he represents with regard to any military, political, professional or other elements.

It is this same concern for prioritizing human rights and dignity which prompted the ITS, following the instructions of the International Commission, to monitor the protection of personal data of the victims and survivors as well as of their families, against undue or intrusive curiosity. With the passage of time and the evolution of ways of thinking, it became necessary and legitimate to extend

The ITS directors appointed by the ICRC

25 July 1955 – 30 June 1970

Nicolas R. Burckhardt

1 July 1970 – 31 December 1977

Albert de Cocatrix

1 January 1978 – 31 October 1985

Philipp Züger

1 November 1985 – 22 June 2006

Charles-Claude Biedermann

23 June 2006 – 13 September 2006

Toni Pfanner

14 September 2006 – 14 December 2006

Jean-Luc Blondel

15 December 2006 – 31 December 2008

Reto Meister

1 January 2009 – 31 December 2012

Jean-Luc Blondel

access to the records stored in Bad Arolsen to researchers and the public. This was done in 2006 by the decision of the International Commission to open up the ITS archives for research. Today the ITS, who still has the mandate, offers numerous and new services to a broad sector of the public, adding historical research and educational activities to its tracing and information work aimed at families. The new Agreement on the ITS, which will take force on January 1, 2013, confirms this welcome development.

Since 1955 the ICRC has provided seven managers to the International Commission for the ITS: Nicolas R. Burckhardt, Albert de Cocatrix, Philipp Züger, Charles-Claude Biedermann, Toni Pfanner, Reto Meister and Jean-Luc Blondel. Thousands of employees, between five and six thousand men and women, many of whom were themselves personally affected by war (I am thinking particularly of displaced persons) worked to accomplish ITS's noble mission. It is them – it is you – I am addressing today to bestow ICRC's recognition for work accomplished, work that remains and continues. If, indeed, in 1955 the work of the ITS and the mission of ICRC were not expected to last more than five years, we now see that this institution, in constant transformation, is destined to last for as long as the work of tracing and preserving memories is necessary. The ICRC is likewise pleased to transfer the management of the ITS in a few weeks' time to Dr. Rebecca Boehling, who was nominated by the International Commission to continue and to develop the work accomplished over the past decades and to contribute her extensive academic knowledge to the benefit of this institution.

During the debate of the 1950s concerning the potential role of the ICRC, the possibility of transferring the records then compiled at the core of the ITS to Geneva, to the ICRC archives, was discussed. The ICRC tended to favour the idea. Not only did this not happen this way, but the ICRC itself gave the ITS thousands of files. Moreover, it leaves the entire records produced during the course of its management in Bad Arolsen, including the correspondence between Bad Arolsen and Geneva on an extensive range of subjects. This can be of use when the time comes for research about the International Tracing Service itself, whose own development is worthy of interest.



Can any lessons already be learned from sixty years of experience? In my view, I see at least three: firstly, the creation of the ITS was a significant political signal: between the Allies and Germany there was the strong conviction that the end of the war would entail a number of tasks, not only the reconstruction of roads or infrastructure, but also of the social fabric. The search for missing persons, or at least clarification of their fate, reuniting families, certainty of the

fate of persons sought, even if this meant determining that they were deceased, were and are essential factors in the reconstruction of a society. When this dimension is neglected, as we have seen in a number of recent conflicts, an entire level of social and psychological reconstruction is lacking and encumbers the process of truth, justice and reconciliation. This was the purpose of the ITS and I am convinced that it has been able to play a positive role in the process of reconciliation in Europe and beyond.

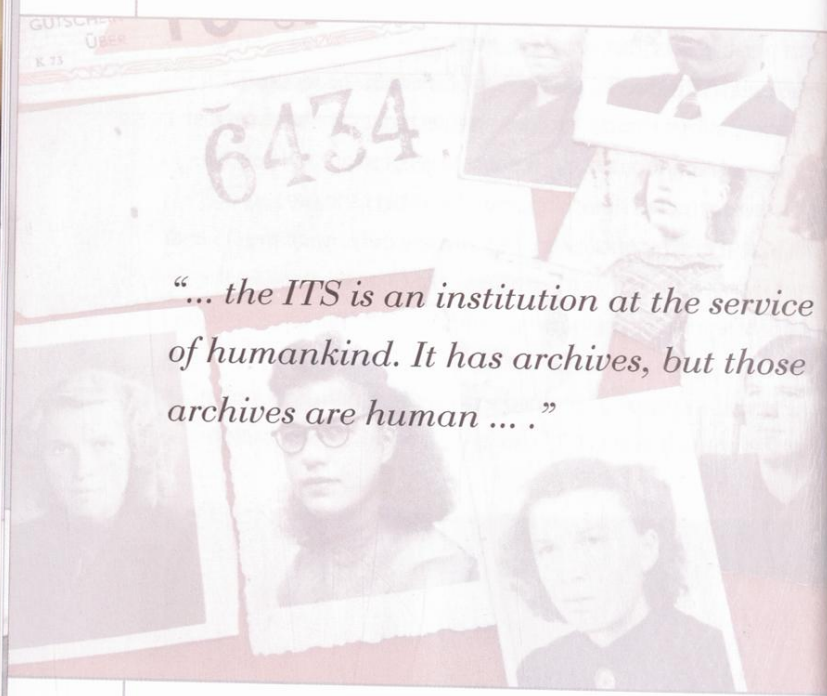
In this sense, a neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian organization such as the ICRC can make a positive contribution



Picture to the left: Among the DPs were also unaccompanied children – the search for relatives and the reunion of families were important tasks after the end of the war.

Picture: The ITS archives in 1952.

to a political process initially burdened by the memory of a hostile past or the lack of confidence between the parties involved. This is a second lesson which remains valid today in other situations of conflict or tension. Of course, humanitarian action alone cannot accomplish the totality of tasks imposed by the post-war period but precisely because its motivation is humanitarian and impartial it acts as a bridge between the parties, becomes the advocate of persons



“... the ITS is an institution at the service of humankind. It has archives, but those archives are human”

in need, opens doors for listening and mutual understanding. In the case of the ITS, this is done by making records available to the survivors or their families, enabling them to assert their rights or to simply find out the fate of loved ones.

Finally, the ITS proves today that it is good to be able to document history, it is useful to be able to base its action (including financial compensation or “Wiedergutmachung”) on well-founded archives. This also applies for the research and education work which is an integral part of the continuation of humanitarian action. In this sense, the archives are not dust-magnet documents that can be relegated to remote places. They are a useful communication tool for the historian and educator, journalist and politician. To conserve and preserve the archives, to open them to the public, result from the duty of preserving memories and of education, and even from the promotion of human rights.

The ICRC will soon give up the management of the ITS. But it is not leaving the ITS or the International Commission, in which it shall remain an observer. From Geneva, and in particular through its Protection Division and the Central Tracing Agency, the ICRC will remain in regular contact with the ITS as a member of the universal humanitarian tracing network constituted by the Red Cross Societies.



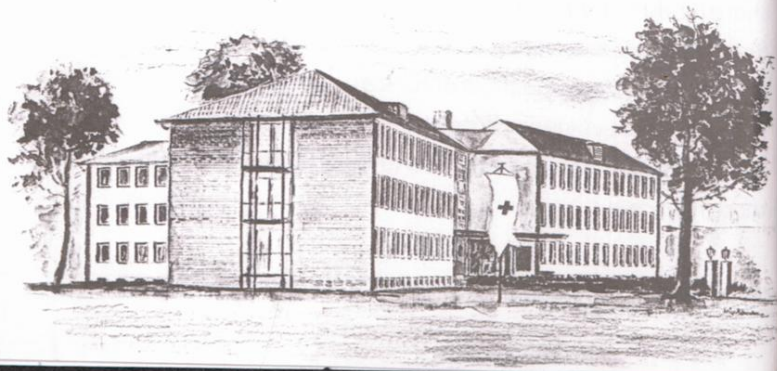
Separation after so many years of working together assuredly has a nostalgic side, but the process unfolds with a feeling of mutual recognition. As far as the ICRC is concerned, it is proud to have received this mandate from the Federal Republic of Germany and allied states, gathered today, with others, in the International Commission. I am not unaware of the moments of tension, for example recently in the debate regarding the opening of the ITS for research, but I also have the feeling that the ICRC knew well how to manage the task entrusted to it in an era where greater tensions made its services as a neutral, impartial and independent organization particularly indispensable.

Without doubt, we live in a different era. The ITS is an institution that is known and recognized, the International Commission naturally assumes its governing function and the German Government, by transferring the administrative responsibility related to the support of the ITS from the Interior Ministry to the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media, shows how the ITS is an instrument of culture and communication, just as the federal German Archives, the future institutional partner of the ITS. Through you, Ministerialdirektorin Ingeborg Berggreen-Merkel, I likewise thank the German government for the continuous support it provided to the ICRC over the course of these many years.

As I have said before, the ITS is an institution at the service of humankind. It has archives, but those archives are human: they remember the immense suffering endured by millions during the course of World War II and thereafter. Professor Thomas Buergethal, you are one of those that the ITS documentation attests. You call yourself, not without bittersweet irony, "a lucky child". But you will tell us that in your own words. I thank you for honouring the ICRC and the ITS, by being present among us today and giving us your testimony.

Indeed, the ICRC is retiring from the management of the ITS. May I suggest, however, that the humanitarian principles that have guided its management continue to inspire the future work of this institution? Neutrality, impartiality and independence. Often misunderstood, neutrality in its strictest sense expresses the availability, the spirit of the service: without intending to judge – and often making mistakes – the attitude of neutrality is at the service of men and women in need, it listens to them and supports them. Impartiality requires objectivity and balance, qualities also so very important in history. With regard to independence, no need to recall the imperative necessity therefore for accomplishing multiple missions, sometimes upsetting, which a humanitarian organization needs to carry out. The International Commission has confirmed the independence of the ITS by giving it a new legal form when the ICRC retires from the management and this is very wise.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a theologian who was part of the resistance against the National Socialist regime and who is recorded in the ITS files, wrote: "Respect for the past and responsibility toward the future give the right attitude toward life." These sparse, yet clear words describe the identity and relevance of the International Tracing Service. Thus, this institution continues its work in the same spirit and with the same determination shown since the end of the Second World War.



“An institution renowned throughout the world”

Greeting by Bernd Neumann, Minister of State for Culture and the Media, Berlin



“Those who live in the memory of their loved ones are not dead, just distant. Only those who are forgotten are truly dead.” This insight as expressed by Immanuel Kant has guided the outstanding work of the International Tracing Service (ITS), which has been under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) since 1955. The ITS has provided information in more than eleven million cases and has therefore shed light on the fates of thousands and reunified families torn apart by war and dictatorship.

“This work must be honoured, continued, and intensified.”

With the ICRC’s withdrawal from the ITS administration and management at the end of 2012 a new chapter in ITS history is opened. Next year the Federal Archives, which is one of the major institutions in my remit, will become the Institutional Partner of the ITS and will help the ITS to maintain its archive and make it more accessible to researchers. The study of the Nazi terror regime is a priority for the Federal Government. We are aware of our responsibility born of a shameful past; the ITS is indispensable to the study of this past. This work must be honoured, continued, and intensified.

I am particularly grateful to the ICRC, which has supported the work of the ITS for more than half a century and thorough its competence and high moral standing helped the ITS become an institution renowned throughout the world.

“A unique memorial site to the victims of a horrendous past”



Thomas Buergenthal, Contemporary Witness and Professor of Comparative Law and Jurisprudence at the George Washington University, Washington D.C.

To be here in Bad Arolsen has a very special meaning for me. Recorded among these vast document files are the way stations of my father's suffering during the Holocaust: the Ghetto of Kielce, Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and, finally, Buchenwald, where he died in January 1945, four months before the end of the War. This is my father's only memorial. There are no others, not even a marked grave with his remains in a cemetery, where my family – my wife and I, our children, grandchildren and their descendants – would be able to express our love and respect for a man who had to die for no reason other than that a murderous regime decreed that he had no right to live.

My father is just one such victim among many millions, Jews and non-Jews alike, who shared his fate, including my maternal grandparents who died in Treblinka and many other close relatives. They also have no marked graves and no memorials other than the files housed here in Bad Arolsen. For them, as for my father, these files are the resting place of their unfulfilled lives, dreams and hopes. All of them murdered because they were born with a religion, race, ethnic identity or sexual orientation that the Nazis decided had to be eliminated.

Recorded here, too, is my mother's post-war search for me after her liberation from Ravensbrück. We were separated in Auschwitz in 1944 and were not reunited until December 1946 in Göttingen, her birthplace. By then, I had survived the infamous January 1945 Death March out of Auschwitz only to find myself in the concentration camp of Sachsenhausen. Liberated by Soviet and Polish troops in April 1945, I became the mascot of the First Polish Kosciuszko Division, and “took part with it”, so to speak, in the battle of Berlin. After the division returned to Poland, I was placed in a Jewish



Picture: Child survivors after the liberation of the concentration camp Auschwitz.

orphanage near Warsaw. There I remained until my mother found me. Many documents detailing her search for me can be found here in Bad Arolsen. She believed that I was alive, even though many of her friends told her that I could not possibly have survived – few children did – but she persisted. Similar stories abound in these files, some happy, many others not. Here I think in particular of the many mothers whose children were not as lucky as I.

What we have here in Bad Arolsen then is a sacred remembrance site for the victims of the Holocaust and of other Nazi atrocities. These files also tell the story of the suffering of those who survived these killing fields. While for some these files contain documents that have only academic and historical value, for us, the survivors and the relatives of the victims, they are a vast and unique memorial site to the victims of a horrendous past. That is why these documents are so precious to us. Here is our hallowed ground.

These documents must be preserved and protected forever to allow the world to remember and to honor the victims of the terrible crimes that the Nazi regime committed. They must also be maintained and made widely accessible to remind the peoples of the world of their obligation to guard against leaders who would lead them to commit similar crimes.

Were it not for the documents in these files, successive generations might find it impossible to imagine, let alone believe, that these horrendous crimes were in fact committed, and on such a massive

scale. The human mind is simply not able to grasp this terrible truth: a nation transformed into a killing machine programmed to destroy millions of innocent human beings for no reason other than that they were different. These files tell the story, not only in terms of the numbers of the victims; they are also a testament to the suffering of each individual human being who perished on the orders of the Nazi regime. They also tell the story of the suffering to which all of us who survived were subjected.

I. T. S.
CHILD SEARCH
CASE COVER SHEET

IRG

Surname: *Abrahamowitz*
Given or children names: *Yehuda, Chana, Herta*
Other names used: *Miriam*
Nationality: *Polish - Jew* Birthdate: *1930* Birthplace: *Lodz, Poland*

Missing child: *M*
Lost child:
Registered child:
Relatives located:

Checked with children's index: *YES*
Card entered into index: *YES*
Date case received: *12.8.49*

Lists on which name appears: *9/8/48*

Action of Correspondence unit:
Letter to CIA Search Class Unit R
Letter to ITC, O.C.I. Office R
Letter to JAFF Tel Aviv R


Date sent out:
29.8.49
19.7.50
30.3.50

Initials:
V.S.
M.S.

Foto-Israel

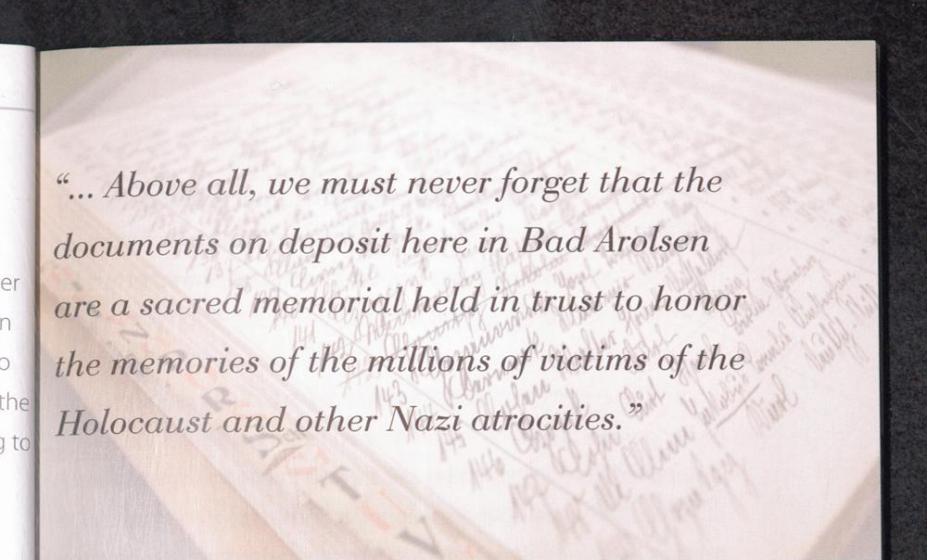
Microfilm 12

Teleg 23. F



That is why I am almost tempted to express my gratitude to the faceless scribes who had to maintain these files and to the policy-makers of the regime who ordered them to be compiled. After all, without realizing it, they preserved the evidence that these heinous crimes were in fact committed. Of course, that was not the Nazi regime's intention; its purpose was proper bookkeeping, heartless in its orderliness and precision: after all, "Ordnung muss sein". That urge, that insane urge to maintain order trumped all other considerations. Here then, for all to see is proof, if one were needed, of the depravity of its leaders and the regime's willing executioners.

Let us not forget, however, that these files tell us only a part of the story. They do not speak and cannot speak of the irreplaceable loss humankind as a whole suffered, with the murder of millions of children, for example, before the world was ever able to benefit from their unique talents! We will therefore never know how many



“... Above all, we must never forget that the documents on deposit here in Bad Arolsen are a sacred memorial held in trust to honor the memories of the millions of victims of the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities.”

of these children, had they lived, would have earned a variety of Nobel Prizes, or how many among them might have become great poets and writers, actors, painters, scholars, musicians, architects, engineers, surgeons, scientists, and master craftsmen, each making ours a better, more knowing and more beautiful world. What we do know is that they were murdered by killers intoxicated by an inhuman ideology; killers who sprang from one of the most civilized nations of the world, a country which, as a result, also suffered the same cultural losses as the rest of the world. We will never be able to fully assess the magnitude of these losses, nor the losses that today's democratic Germany is still burdened with because of those horrendous crimes.

For the victims of the Holocaust and their descendants and for the descendants of the non-Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities, these files will forever remain sacred family memorials. Here they will be able to recover the missing strands of their family histories and roots. And here too they will finally have access to the information that until recently they were for decades not able or allowed to see – an injustice that has yet to be fully accounted for and that must not be repeated.

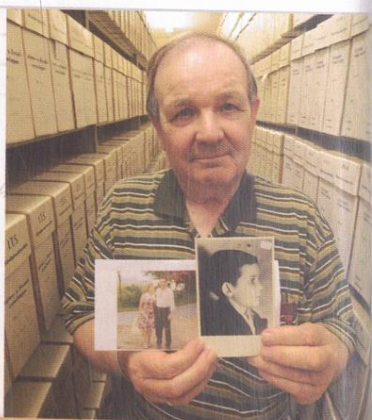
For teachers, scholars, and researchers of many different disciplines, the Bad Arolsen documents can now become an inexhaustible laboratory and historical archive. Here they might be able to gain insights into the causes of this tragic period and seek to understand the mentality of those “ordinary Germans” who executed the Nazi regime's extermination policies. Of interest as well might be the beliefs and convictions of those Germans who, at the risk of their own lives, opposed those policies and tried to save the lives of the intended victims. I saw some of these courageous Germans

in Sachsenhausen, and I still remember that I was told at the time that many among them were Catholic priests, ministers of other religious denominations, and Jehovah's witnesses. They seemed to be treated more brutally than we.

It is my hope that scholars from different parts of the world will be encouraged to come to Bad Arolsen to study the files that are maintained here and that they will be free to engage in research of particular interest to them. I consider it important that special support be given to research that seeks to understand why some individuals never lost their moral compass in the midst of the Holocaust and other atrocities, while others – the Kapos in Auschwitz for example – became willing collaborators and even willing killers. We need that type of research if we are ever to succeed in the struggle to prevent future Holocausts, future genocides.



The IJS today and tomorrow:
An archive and institution
dedicated to provide infor-
mation for survivors, family
members, historians and the
interested public.



This question is not one merely for psychiatrists and psychologists to explore. It requires collaborative research efforts by scholars trained in various disciplines and working in different parts of the world. I hope, therefore, that the ITS' new administration will facilitate and encourage such studies and that German and foreign funding agencies will provide support for them.

It is also very important for the ITS to continue and further develop educational programs and curricular materials to be used in primary and secondary schools. The earlier we acquaint children of different ages with the existence of these files and their contents, the easier it will be to teach the history of the Holocaust and others mass killings. Every new generation of children must be familiarized with this terrible past and its horrendous consequences. Case studies drawn from these files would be particularly effective teaching aids. In this effort, the victims must have names, they must be seen to have been human beings and not just numbers – six million for example – which unintentionally dehumanizes those who were murdered.

Also not to be forgotten are yet another type of documents housed here in Bad Arolsen. These are files that were compiled a few years after the Second World War. They constitute yet another historical treasure trove which contains important information about the lives of vast numbers of Displaced Persons, including Holocaust survivors, slave laborers, former prisoners of war and political refugees from the Soviet Union and other Communist countries. Many of these DPs, as we used to call them, eventually emigrated to Israel, the United States, Australia and Canada, among other countries. Others stayed in Germany or moved to nearby European countries. What we have here is a documentary history of a mass migration or population transfer, a "Völkerwanderung" of immense proportions that remains to be fully studied and understood.

Scholars in countries where these immigrants eventually settled have studied the manner in which they were integrated into their new homelands. But the authors of these studies were not always able to draw on the personal histories and camp experiences of these immigrants; they were either not aware of the existence of this information or were given to understand that they would not be allowed to view these files. That information will now be accessible to them here in Bad Arolsen.

In thinking of these files, I have often wondered what character traits, in addition to sheer luck, enabled many DPs to survive the Holocaust, for example, and what if any impact those character traits may have had on their ability to make new and frequently successful lives for themselves in their adopted homelands. In that connection, it may well be asked whether similar studies might not also be of use to various countries that today face an influx of ever larger numbers of immigrants. Politicians in these countries frequently focus on alleged negative consequences of immigration, while paying little attention to the beneficial economic and social impact of immigration.

Speaking of research, it would probably make sense for the ITS to establish one or more advisory councils to assist the new director and her staff to develop, encourage and support research and educational programs drawing on the information found in the Bad Arolsen files. It would also make sense for the director to convene meetings from time to time with representatives of major Holocaust and related centers in order to explore and develop new programs or ideas for the better utilization of ITS files. Bad Arolsen might in time even become a clearing house or information center for such activities.



Above all, we must never forget that the documents on deposit here in Bad Arolsen are a sacred memorial held in trust to honor the memories of the millions of victims of the Holocaust and other Nazi atrocities. These documents are also here to remind the world of the horrendous crimes the Nazi regime perpetrated, not in order to encourage hatred against today's Germany, which deserves admiration for its transformation from a killer nation into a truly democratic country, but above all, as a perpetual reminder of the obligation that we and all future generations have to ensure that this terrible past is never repeated.

Permit me, finally, to thank the International Committee of the Red Cross for its long stewardship of these documents. I would also like to express my appreciation to you, Mr. Blondel, for discharging your position as director of the ITS with understanding and empathy for those of us who wanted to learn more about the fate of our loved ones. Let me also congratulate you, Professor Boehling, on your appointment as director of the new ITS. I wish you much satisfaction and success in this important position. It is my profound hope that the relationship between the Federal Archive and the ITS will be mutually supportive, most fruitful and cordial in protecting the sacred character of the Bad Arolsen documents.



“Humanity's ancestral inheritance”

Jennifer L. Rodgers, Ph.D Candidate, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

“This is a service dedicated to millions of innocent victims of war, dictatorship and intolerance and to their families. We serve the dead and the living, men and women, adults and children, Jews and gentiles, we serve all nationalities, the Germans, the Czechs, the Dutch, the Poles, we serve concentration camp victims regardless whether they were social democrats, liberals, communists or gypsies. We serve – period!”¹

Hugh Elbot, the American director of the International Tracing Service, celebrated the agency's new headquarters with these words in August of 1952. From its origins in wartime Washington and London, through the Cold War to the present, the ITS has provided humanitarian aid and information services to a broad spectrum of individuals, governments and institutions.



Picture: The ITS staff in the early years under the management of the Allied High Commission. In the background the former SS barracks that served as ITS headquarters until a new main building was erected in 1952.

The tracing service received recent media coverage because of widespread efforts to restore public access to its archive after almost 30 years. The extended inaccessibility and the International Committee of the Red Cross' desire to operate the agency out of the public eye have obscured the organization's history. However, the reopening of the archives to the public in late 2007 has given scholars the opportunity to examine the tracing service's institutional records, and consequently expand their studies to corollary archival collections in North America, Europe and Israel.² These initial studies demonstrate the significant impact that control over the agency – "humanity's ancestral inheritance" as it was called in 1980 – had on post-war politics, society and culture.³

This inheritance was a response to the ever-growing European refugee crisis created by the Second World War. The United States Department of State discussed already in 1942 the need for an agency to locate, and where possible, reunite individuals missing as a course of the war. In Europe, several discreet organizations including the British Red Cross Society, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (UNRRA), and Intergovernmental Committee



Picture: The ITS staff in 1969.

ITS Director Nicolas R. Burckhardt

Bernd Joachim Zimmer, Historian, Bad Arolsen

Nicolas R. Burckhardt (1909-2003) joined the International Committee of the Red Cross rather accidentally: to pursue his interest in distant countries, a friend and university lecturer suggested he contact the ICRC. Although his first attempt failed because a peace treaty had been reached in the designated region of deployment, he was remembered and employed temporarily for a few weeks after the outbreak of the Civil War in Spain. The employment turned out to last 33 years.

Between 1940 and 1942 he gained crucial experience in the Central Tracing Agency for Prisoners of War in Geneva, which would prepare him for his future tasks in Arolsen. His next assignment led him to London where he established important contacts with exile governments. After the war he led the ICRC delegation in the British occupation zone, and from 1948 he became a member of

on Refugees, concurrently discussed tracing the missing and facilitating contact between displaced persons. In addition, the Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF) included tracing in their plans for the relief and reconstruction of Germany. The military authorities consulted with the aforementioned groups and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva about tracing, and established the SHAEF Tracing and Locating Unit in the spring of 1945.

The Allies tasked it with collecting nominal lists from concentration camps for later use in tracing activities at the national level. After the end of hostilities, the tracing unit took on a quadripartite character, and the military governments, who considered civilian searches a non-military operation, transferred its administration to UNRRA's Central Tracing Bureau under a mandate that included tracing and document collection.



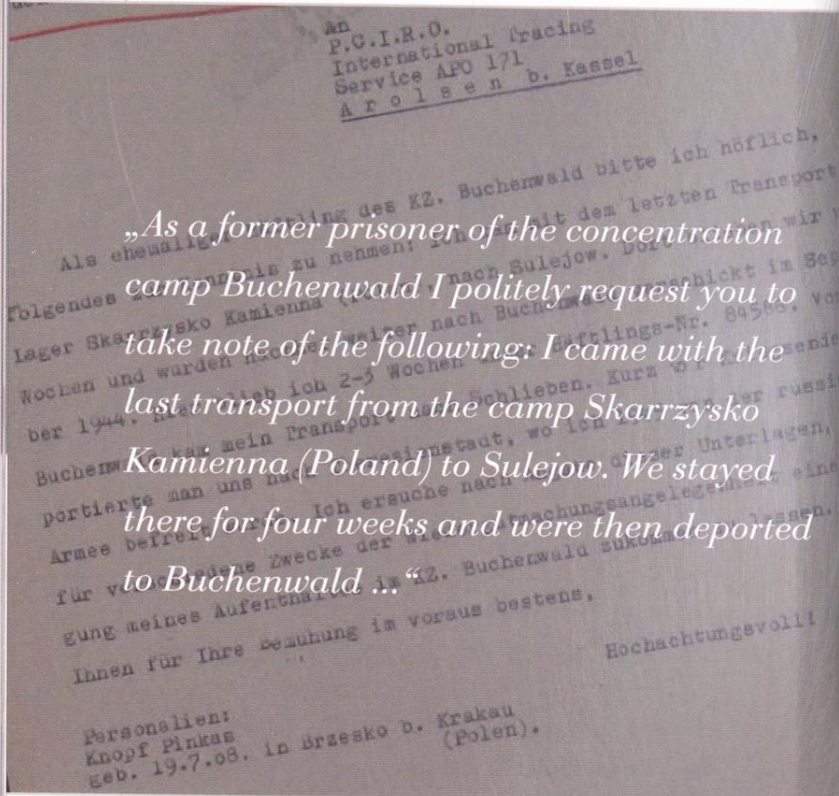
the delegation for West Germany. Missions in Pakistan, India, Korea and Vietnam followed.

On suggestion of the ICRC president he accepted the newly established position of ITS director in June 1955. Fifteen years later, in 1970, he left Arolsen and returned to his parental home in Basel. He received the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany for his achievements at the ITS.

In 1946, the Allies moved the tracing bureau from near Frankfurt am Main to the Hessian town of Arolsen because it was roughly equidistant to all four zones of occupation and had intact infrastructure.

UNRRA, like many relief agencies with an interim mandate, terminated its operations as planned in 1947, amid allegations of mismanagement of the tracing bureau. These two factors cast doubt onto the continuation of the operations. However, the Allies acknowledged the importance of the agency for the international community, and thus sought a different institution to supervise it. UNRRA's successor, the International Refugee Organization (IRO), eventually agreed to assume further responsibility. In 1948, the IRO centralized disparate local, national and international tracing efforts and re-established the Central Tracing Bureau as the International Tracing Service.

The reorganization and change in administration significantly impacted the agency's mandate, effectively repurposing it to serve broader political agendas. It ended Soviet participation in operations due to Moscow's unwillingness to recognize the IRO, a circumstance that had previously excluded International Committee of the Red Cross participation in the Central Tracing Bureau. Moreover, it resulted in American dominance in policy formation and increased collaboration with German authorities at a crucial juncture in the Cold War, thereby exacerbating growing tensions between the humanitarian mandate and the political agendas of Western governments. These factors shaped the organization's path in the following decades.

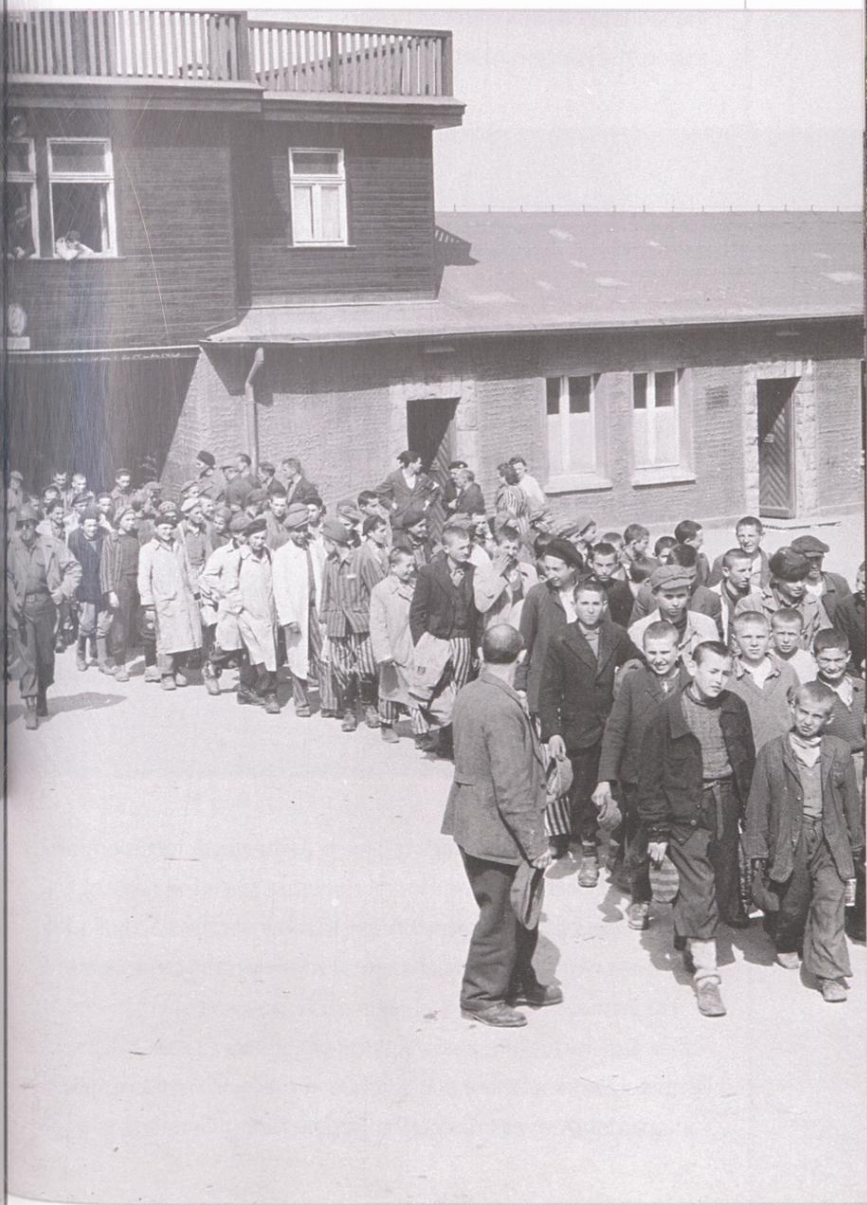


Picture above and quote: Personal letter of a former concentration camp prisoner to the ITS asking for a certificate of incarceration in October 1949.

Picture to the right: Buchenwald prisoners after their liberation by the US Army.

When the IRO took over the tracing service, it reached an agreement with the Western Allies to either terminate operations and establish a research institute around the archive, or transfer them to a more permanent organization. Under heavy pressure from the international community and victim groups to continue operations, the Allied Military Governments and successor Allied High Commission for Germany explored several options, including the ICRC and United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees.

However, these inquiries foundered by late 1950 in part over concern, especially on the part of Washington, that the neutrality and universal service mandates of non-governmental, humanitarian



organizations would negatively impact refugees from Eastern Europe, or even that Soviet Union might gain control of the archive itself. They also could interfere with American agencies' use of the archive for refugee programs, which included anti-Soviet propaganda.

Two additional factors informed the decision by the Allied High Commission to directly operate the ITS until they could decide upon its ultimate fate. First, American budget cuts and waning inquiries for direct tracing led to the termination of these activities in 1949, though child tracing continued until 1951. Second, primary function of the agency had become certifying claims and issuing death certificates for social welfare and indemnification programs that benefitted the victims of National Socialist persecution. For this reason, the Western Allies deliberated as early as 1947 a possible



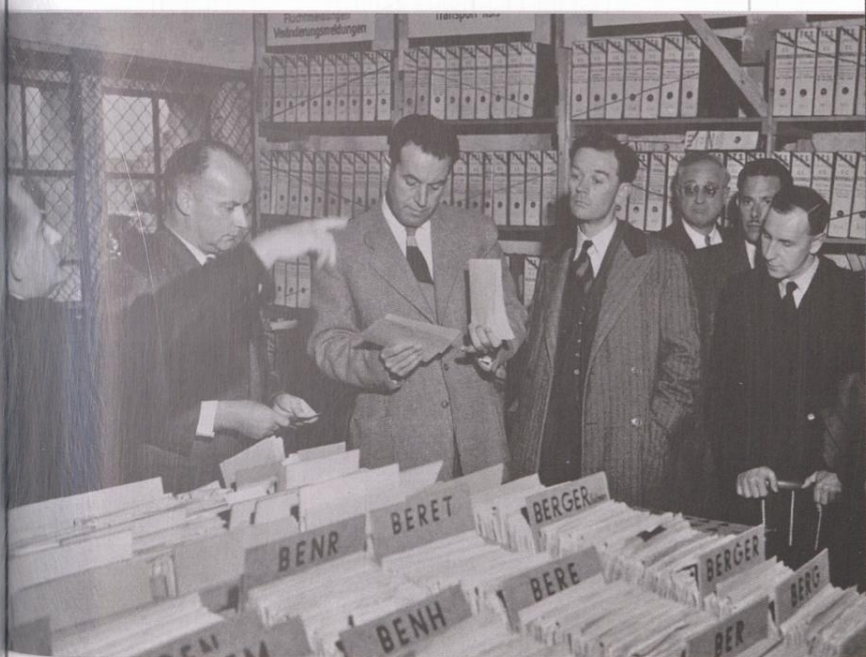
Picture above: The International Tracing Service was managed by different organizations before the ICRC took over.

Picture to the right: Guided tour through the ITS archives in 1952.

German takeover of the tracing service. At the encouragement of French and American government representatives, the nascent Federal Republic of Germany offered to take over the ITS, thus sparking tense negotiations on ultimate control over the organization and its archive.

Ultimately, none of these plans came to fruition. In February 1955, various controversies from public distrust of West Germany, to a

Council of Europe takeover of operations, and the nationality of the future director compelled the West German request to the Red Cross to administrate the agency. The scheme also allowed the Federal Republic to fulfil its war burden of guaranteeing the continuation of the ITS. It also presented the ICRC, according to the Israeli Foreign Office, a means by which to deal with an "internal crisis" over its future and role "in present world conditions." Earlier concerns over the organization's neutral and universal mandate dissipated, as Geneva assured Washington uncontested ownership and access to the archive, and to continue policies of limiting information exchanges with Moscow and its allies.⁴ This solution proved acceptable to all parties and the Bonn Accords transferred the ITS to the administration of the International Committee of the Red Cross on May 5, 1955, under the control of an eight nation International Commission.



Owing to the longstanding view that the ITS was a relic of immediate post-war relief efforts and thus an interim organization, the Bonn Accords stipulated quinquennial review of operations and the question of the agency's ultimate fate. In 1960, the governments of the International Commission, including new member Greece, agreed to extend the Bonn Accords without amendment because of the continued need for access to the archive for West German indemnification programs. At this stage, the International

ICRC administration of the ITS. Moreover, they also agreed that no additional countries could join the Commission, despite the easing relations between East and West.

The ITS continued its mandated activities of document collection and humanitarian aid – answering individual inquiries and indemnification claims – under new director Albert de Cocatrix during the 1970s. He also expanded access to the archive for historians and historical scholarship. However, a worldwide shift in data-privacy legislation, internal financial difficulties, and an increasing backlog of inquiries triggered a reevaluation of the agency's mandate, and even its right to exist, in the late 1970s and 1980s.⁶

De Cocatrix's successor, Philipp Züger, and members of the International Commission thus reinterpreted the Bonn Accords and decided to pursue humanitarian activities as defined in 1955, allowing for historical inquiries only in cases because the ITS found itself increasingly under "moral or political pressure" to undertake such work.⁷

The orthodox interpretation of the tracing service's *raison d'être* and data-privacy laws consequently created a shroud of secrecy around the agency in the 1980s. The ITS continued operations, but earlier accessibility and the relative transparency in operations evaporated. These circumstances alarmed the international community. As awareness of the Holocaust and desire for information about it grew, several non-governmental groups, such as the German Studies Association and the Conference for Jewish Material Claims against Germany lobbied the ICRC to reopen the archive. These petitions fell on deaf ears. The end of the Cold War, scrutiny on compensation and restitution programs, and ever-decreasing numbers of Holocaust survivors served as a catalyst for more vigorous debate on the status of the ITS in the 1990s.

In the past decade, German debates on the Berlin Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe and diplomatic efforts, led by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, spurred renewed media attention on the tracing service and the inaccessibility to its collections. International efforts finally succeeded in restoring access to the archive in 2007.

As the ICRC withdraws its long-time administration of the International Tracing Service in 2012, it is clear that the agency has finally begun to realize the original plans envisioned by the Western Allies and West Germany of becoming a research institution of international repute.



1 ITS Digital Archives Doc. 82507500, Allierte 52: 20 August 1952 Elbot welcome speech to the new administrative building in Arolsen.

2 See Jean Marc Dreyfus, "A Bad Arolsen dans la forêt des archives nazies," *La Vie des Idées*, (2008): last accessed 15 February 2012, http://www.laviedesidees.fr/IMG/pdf/20080911_badarolsen.pdf; and Bernd Joachim Zimmer, *International Tracing Service: Von der Vermisstensuche zur Haftbescheinigung. Die Organisation eines « ungewollten Kindes » während der Besatzungszeit*, (Bad Arolsen: Waldeckischer Geschichtsverein, 2011.). In addition, Dreyfus has a forthcoming publication on French diplomats and the ITS. The author of this article is currently finishing a dissertation that examines how Western governments- Washington, Bonn, Paris, London and Jerusalem- and the International Committee of the Red Cross used the ITS to promote and legitimize political and cultural agendas in the post- World War II era.

3 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA-AA), B85/ 1552, 2 April 1980 Minutes of the meeting of the International Commission of the ITS.

4 National Archives and Records Administration, RG 466 HiCOG Bonn Classified General Records, 1953-1955, Box 233 Folder 572.1 Red Cross – International Tracing Service 1953-1955, 4 February 1955 Confidential from Dowling to Dulles regarding a possible takeover of the ITS by the Red Cross.

5 Bundesarchiv Koblenz (BAK), NL Lübke, see miscellaneous correspondence dated between June 1965 and March 1966 regarding the examination of documents from the Buchenwald concentration camps held at the ITS to ascertain German President Heinrich Lübke's knowledge of and complicity in Nazi crimes.

6 PA-AA, B85/ 1551, 8 February 1978 report from West German Representative to International Organizations in Geneva Rudolf Jaestadt to the Foreign Office and embassies at Moscow, Warsaw and Prague.

7 PA-AA, B85/ 1644, 8 May 1981 minutes of the meeting of the International Commission for the ITS, comments of ITS Director Philipp Züger.

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