

Leaflet

After the end of World War II, the main task of the International Tracing Service (ITS) was to trace non-Germans, missing or displaced during the war, and to assist in reuniting families which at that time had become separated. Today the name “Tracing Service” is misleading, because the tracing of missing persons represents only a small percentage of the total ITS activity. Now the main task consists in collecting, classifying and evaluating records, with a view to giving information contained in them on:

- detainees of concentration camps and other places of detention under the command of the “Reichsführer-SS” on the territory of the Reich and on the German-occupied territories, from 1933 to 1945;
- Jewish deportees during the Nazi period;
- foreigners who were on the territory of the Reich, mainly on the territory of today’s Federal Republic of Germany, during the period from 1939 to 1945;
- displaced persons (DP’s) who, after World War II, were under the care of international relief organizations – such as UNRRA, IRO, etc., mainly on the territory of today’s Federal Republic of Germany, in Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Great Britain;
- “children” (i.e. under 18 years of age at the end of the war) of persons belonging to the above-mentioned categories and displaced or separated from their parents as a result of the war, or born in Germany during the war.

An investigation of the documentary material by means of the different index cards, can only be initiated if the inquiry contains complete personal data (including changes of names, cover names or pseudonyms and other relevant particulars) and – if possible – information on whereabouts during detention, and also places and periods of employment, including the name of the employer or firm. In the case of concentration camp detention, the detainee’s number – if remembered – should be stated.

The records of the ITS are by no means complete. Many documents were destroyed before the liberation or the evacuation of the camps, or were lost owing to wartime conditions. Consequently not every applicant can count on receiving the requested certificate.

In the interest of the protection of the individual rights, information is only given to the former persecutees, or to their close relatives. Information is disclosed to third parties only with the written consent of the persons concerned.

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ITS certificates can only be issued on the basis of the records available in ITS archives and not on evidential material submitted by the applicants (e.g. letters from the concentration camp, etc.) or the testimony of witnesses.

The ITS can take no responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of entries in the documents nor is it permitted to correct misspellings or mistakes which might have occurred.

Should the ITS receive new or additional information long after an inquiry has been made, the inquirer will be informed – even years later – without having to remind it.

The functions of the ITS do not include informing persons whether they are entitled to indemnification or a pension for incarceration suffered in concentration camps or else- where, for loss of health, for work performed or for wages not received. Only the respective home authorities are competent to give advice in respect of this question. The ITS itself cannot grant any aid or indemnification.

Information on prisoners of war is given by the “Division de l’Agence centrale de recherches et des activités de protection” (the former Central Tracing Agency for Prisoners of War) of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Geneva. The address is:

Comité international
de la Croix-Rouge
GEN/ARCH
19, avenue de la Paix
1202 GENÈVE
SWITZERLAND

However, exceptions are prisoners of war who, after their release from war captivity, were assigned to civilian work. The ITS holds extensive records on such prisoners who were assigned to labour in Germany.

Tracing of missing German nationals, who were not victims of the National Socialist Persecution, is conducted by the Tracing Service of the German Red Cross, Munich. The address is:

Deutsches Rotes Kreuz
Generalsekretariat
Suchdienst München
Chiemgaustrasse 109
81549 MÜNCHEN
BUNDESREPUBLIK DEUTSCHLAND