

Press release

Memorials receive digital copies of ITS

Bad Arolsen, July 6, 2017 – The International Tracing Service (ITS) is providing concentration camp memorials with digital copies of the its documents. Each memorial can integrate the digital documents relating to the respective concentration camp into its own database and use them for researching the fates of former inmates. “Access to documents and information is tremendously important to the survivors and family members of victims of Nazi persecution,” said ITS Director Floriane Hohenberg. “We want to enable widespread access.”

Most of the digitized copies are documents relating to the fates of individuals, such as prisoner registration cards, or to the organization of the camps. The ITS is also supplying the associated metadata and archival descriptions, which make it possible to search for the documents in a database. “At the end of the war, the SS destroyed nearly the entire camp registry at Bergen-Belsen. This is why we don’t even know the names of more than half the people deported to the camp,” said Jens-Christian Wagner, Director of the Lower Saxony Memorials Foundation, commenting on the data that was handed over in Bad Arolsen. With the digital files from the ITS and the accompanying metadata, it will now be possible to fill in the data analysis gaps. “This is not only a great step forward for our own research, it will also benefit the many family members and external researchers who turn to us with questions about the fates of persecuted individuals.”

The ITS archive holds around four million documents from various concentration camps. The best-documented camps are Buchenwald (over two million documents) and Dachau (nearly 660,000 documents), which were liberated by the US Army in April 1945. Rikola-Gunnar Lüttgenau, Deputy Director of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation, said, “For our day-to-day work with the relatives of former prisoners, the ability to use metadata to analyze the Buchenwald documents is practically revolutionary. We can now provide much better support to families with inquiries, and we have entirely new options for biographical and group-specific research as well.”

An agreement between the ITS and the respective memorials guarantees that the property and privacy rights and the authenticity of the documents are preserved. “It is only logical for the memorials, with their many visitors and inquiries, to have direct access to the documents from the ITS archive,” stressed ITS Director Floriane Hohenberg. “It supports us in our shared effort

to draw the necessary conclusions from the suffering of the victims and the examination of Nazi history.”

About the ITS

The International Tracing Service (ITS) is an archive and a center for documenting National Socialist persecution and the liberated survivors. Out of the more than 30 million documents, former victims of Nazism and their families receive information regarding their incarceration, forced labor, and postwar allied assistance. The documents in the ITS archives provide the basis for research and education. As of 2013 the original documents in the ITS archives are included on the UNESCO "Memory of the World" Registry. The ITS is governed by representatives from 11 member states. The German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media funds the ITS. The German Federal Archives is the institutional partner of the ITS.

Parts of the collections are accessible in the Online Archive: digitalcollections.its-arolsen.org

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