

Press release

ITS records high inquiry numbers

Bad Arolsen, January 25, 2017 – In 2016, the International Tracing Service (ITS) received 15,635 inquiries. This further slight increase shows that interest in the fates of Nazi persecution victims is as strong as ever – even though more than seventy years have passed since the end of World War II.

All over the world, there are people with unanswered questions about the fates of their relatives who were murdered, persecuted or deported by the Nazi regime. The International Tracing Service (ITS) serves them as a key partner. That is because its archives – which hold the status of UNESCO documentary heritage – preserve proof of the persecution of some 17.5 million persons. In 2016, the number of inquiries rose slightly over that of the previous year: whereas 15,418 applied to the ITS for information in 2015, in 2016 it was 15,635. Over 15 percent of last year's inquiries (2,189) came from researchers, scholars and teachers.

Of the persons who contacted the ITS in 2016, more than 2,000 were themselves survivors of Nazi persecution. One reason for this is a change in the regulations for victim groups previously not eligible for pensions. Thanks to new legislation in Poland, Jewish victims of Nazi persecution who were in Poland during the period of their persecution, but have lived outside the country since then, can now receive pensions. The ghetto pension regulation was also reformed. According to estimates of the German federal government, this affects approximately 40,000 ghetto workers still alive today. In order to receive their pensions, the survivors require proof of their persecution and imprisonment from the ITS. "The ITS is presently granting top priority to the inquiries of survivors of very advanced age", comments ITS director Floriane Hohenberg. "We're doing everything in our power to enable them to assert their claims as quickly as possible. In the process, we're working closely with the Polish Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression. To ensure rapid processing, the ITS issues the documents directly in Polish."

The number of persons the applicants asked for information about rose significantly. Whereas the inquiries pertained to 21,909 persons in 2015, in 2016 that amount rose by 12 percent to 24,456. People from countries around the world contacted the ITS. Last year, inquiries came in from 73 nations, above all Germany (3,267), followed by Poland (2,469), the Russian Federation (1,702) and the United States (1,325). "Our work shows us that the later generations are still very interested in learning about their own roots and filling in the gaps in their knowledge", Floriane Hohenberg observes. "What's more, our efforts have the effect of

spreading the word about the ITS – so that people in Central and Eastern European countries, for example, find out who they can turn to with their questions.”

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. In continuing to fulfill these responsibilities, the ITS is part of an international cooperation with memorial sites, archives and research institutes.

The ITS commemorates and memorializes the victims of the Nazi crimes. 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: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Poland, United Kingdom, USA. The German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media funds the ITS. The German Federal Archives is the institutional partner of the ITS.

Specially chosen collections are accessible in the Online Archive: digitalcollections.its-arolsen.org

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