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Opening the Archives of the International Tracing Service (ITS)

How did it happen? What does it mean?

Abstract

Until the end of 2007, ITS was the largest collection of inaccessible records anywhere that shed light on the fates of people from across Europe – Jews of course, and members of virtually every other nationality as well – who were arrested, deported, sent to concentration camps, and even murdered by the Nazis; who were put to forced and slave labour under inhuman conditions, calculated in many places to result in death; and who were displaced from their homes and families, and unable to return home at war's end. These were documents that Allied forces collected as they liberated camps and forced labour sites across Europe in the last months of the war and during their post-war occupation and administration of Germany and Austria. The archives of the International Tracing Service in Bad Arolsen, Germany, contains over 50 million World War II era documents relating to the fates of over 17.5 million people. Using samples and case studies, the author, who led the campaign to open the archives, provides an insider's view of the years-long effort to open the collections for research and discuss the importance of this recent event for Holocaust survivors, other victims of National Socialism, and scholars.

I would like to thank the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust-Studies for inviting me to deliver this third Simon Wiesenthal Lecture. In the 1970s, Simon Wiesenthal and I collaborated, at long distance, in uncovering documentation that led to the removal of citizenship and deportation from the United States of the first fascist leader against whom the United States Justice Department took such action. You may not remember who that was, but I will remind you later. I cannot adequately express the admiration I had for the man whose name this lecture series carries. I am truly honoured to have been asked, and consider it a great privilege to deliver this evening's lecture in the one hundredth anniversary year of Simon Wiesenthal's birth.

Before I begin my main subject, and in memory of Simon Wiesenthal, I would like to show you a few documents:

- a card from the Central Name Index of the International Tracing Service, indicating that Simon Wiesenthal appears on a list of prisoners at Groß-Rosen;
- and here is the list – Szymon Wizenhal is number 91, PZ, or Polish Jew, born December 31, 1908, prisoner number 127371;
- and here a document with the list of ghettos, labour camps, prisons, and concentration camps where Simon Wiesenthal managed to survive from August 15, 1941 to May 5, 1945;
- and here is a similar list for Mrs. Wiesenthal, Cyla – you can see that both were from Buczac and were sent to the Lvov ghetto the same day, but were separated just a few weeks later;

- and here Mrs. Wiesenthal's displaced person registration card, filed June 8, 1945 and signed by her, her destination of choice when she registered at Assembly Center 64, Palestine or the United States.

These are just a few of the documents in the International Tracing Service archives that record what the Wiesenthals experienced during the Shoah. I offer these few pages so that we all remember Simon and Cyla Wiesenthal now.

If you will permit me, I will speak for a while, and then come back to this short excerpt from America's most prominent television news program *60 Minutes*. The full segment was broadcast in December 2006. You can still see it in its entirety on the *60 Minutes* web site. Walter Feiden was a native of Vienna. You may be interested in seeing his story.

Beyond professional credentials, I want to tell you something about myself. My father's father Louis came to the United States in 1905 from the Settlement Pale in Czarist Russia. My grandmother, whose maiden name was Mary Berman, and two children came with him. The family name was changed from Schaechet to Shapiro on arrival in America. Louis and his brother Benjamin and Mary were the only members of the Schaechet or Berman families who left Russia. My mother's father's family was Sephardic. They were part of the wave of Sephardim that took refuge after 1492 in the Ottoman Empire and moved north, eventually settling in Galicia. Simcha Kartiganer, my great-grandfather, left for America in 1900 and brought over his five children, one by one, as he could afford to. No other Kartiganers left Europe. My grandfather Isadore Kartiganer, married Tillie Stanger, also one of five children, in the only part of her family that left Poland. My grandmother never learned to read or write, and my mother wrote letters for her to the family that had stayed behind. Until the Holocaust.

The Schaechets, the Bermans, the Kartiganers, the Stangers – all, except these few who went to America – were murdered. The names of some Kartiganers appear in Auschwitz labour records, but most, to the best of my knowledge, are as yet unidentified and unrecorded.

Which brings me to the archives of the International Tracing Service, or ITS – more than 50 million pages of original documentation relating to 17.5 million people victimised by the Nazis – including, perhaps, some Schaechets, some Bermans, some Kartiganers, and some Stangers.

Until the end of 2007, ITS was the largest collection of inaccessible records anywhere that shed light on the fates of people from across Europe – Jews of course, and members of virtually every other nationality as well – who were arrested, deported, sent to concentration camps, and even murdered by the Nazis; who were put to forced and slave labour under inhuman conditions, calculated in many places to result in death; and who were displaced from their homes and families, and unable to return home at war's end. These were documents that Allied forces collected as they liberated camps and forced labour sites across Europe in the last months of the war and during their post-war occupation and administration of Germany and Austria. They include also the records of displaced persons camps run by the allies and records assembled by UNRRA and the International Refugee Organization after the war. Additional thousands of collections continued to be deposited at ITS by governments, organizations and individuals right up until 2006. Sometimes they were placed there precisely because governments knew that if they were at Bad Arolsen, no one would ever see them.

Why in Bad Arolsen? Arolsen was in a region of Germany that was liberated early and the town had not been heavily bombed. Arolsen housed an extensive SS training

facility, thanks to the influence of SS-Obergruppenführer Josias, Hereditary Prince of Waldeck and Pyrmont, who was responsible for the Weimar region of the Third Reich and whose family's ancestral residence was (and is) in the town. As Allied forces approached, of course, the SS barracks were empty and available – an appropriate place to store documents.

It is unlikely that the people who assembled those records in the aftermath of World War II – collecting them from camps, forced labour sites, Gestapo offices, prisons, etc. – could have imagined that six decades later what grew to be a collection of over 50 million Holocaust-related documents would still be hidden away in Bad Arolsen and inaccessible to survivors or scholars. And who would believe that eleven generally enlightened democratic governments, including the United States and Israel, whether intentionally or unintentionally, but definitely placing a higher value on diplomatic consensus than on human compassion or moral obligation, would be responsible for keeping this documentation out of reach? And who would believe that those governments and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which I will refer to simply as the Red Cross, appeared ready sixty years later to see the last remnant of the Holocaust survivor generation disappear without giving them access to their records and information about their families, and without providing them with the comfort of knowing that the documentary record of what happened to them and to the loved ones they lost would not be conveniently kept under wraps, “swept under the rug” as one survivor said to me, once the survivors were gone? At first blush no one would have believed any of this, and yet this was the situation.

This evening, I want to provide a glimpse into the political struggle that was involved in opening ITS, though it is too early to tell the whole story, and then describe the ITS collections and show you some samples. I want to provide a quick status report regarding the digital copying of the archives, the transfer of copies to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and the scholarly and educational potential of the archives. I will close with some thoughts on the multiple layers of significance of these archives.

The Struggle to Open the Archives of the ITS

I first attended a meeting of the 11-country International Commission that sets policy for ITS in Paris in May 2001, to see if I could mobilise the Commission to honour a promise it had made in 1998 to open the archives. I had no idea then how difficult the task would be. Yes, the documentation in the archives was massive, but it was 50 to 60 years old. And surely the Red Cross and the governments on the Commission would understand the urgency of the matter. The timetable for the project, I kept insisting, could not be a leisurely diplomatic timetable, nor an archivist's timetable. The real timetable was the actuarial table of a survivor generation that tragically was already rapidly disappearing.

The International Commission was locked in debate about possible “access guidelines” that had been drafted, debated, redrafted, and debated again. The guidelines were upsetting, to say the least: Advance application to visit the archive would be required, with no time limit for receiving a response. No access would be granted if ITS determined that the person did not really need to see the records. No access to finding aids. The researcher was to pay all costs associated with staff assistance he or she might receive, with assistance available and access provided only when the staff was not otherwise busy. All information in the documents that related to persons,

places or dates was to be blacked out before the researcher could see anything. Each researcher would be required to purchase liability insurance for ITS, the Red Cross, and the 11 governments, in case the researcher misused the records and got sued. Such regulations, of course, were likely to ensure – and were probably calculated to ensure – that no one would actually apply or gain access to the archives!

In addition, the countries were locked in an on-going controversy over whose “privacy” and “archival” laws and practices would apply. Countries reluctant to open the archives – the majority – together with ITS leadership and the Red Cross, proposed privacy regulations that included the most restrictive conditions that appeared in any of the regulations of any of the countries; that is, they were advocating the most restrictive common denominator.

By the end of that first meeting, it was clear to me that nothing would be decided in 2001. In spite of the urgency I tried to communicate, the Commission did not plan any further discussion of the matter for a full year, until its next annual meeting, scheduled for a single day in May 2002, in Berlin.

I visited ITS together with the only person in the United States State Department who was willing to listen when I insisted that as a member state of the International Commission we had a right to get past the front door. I was overwhelmed by six buildings full of the documentation of transports, deportations, concentration camps, Gestapo offices, forced and slave labour sites, burial records, displaced persons camps, resettlement files, and other records relating to millions of innocent victims of the Nazis and their allies. Not only were these archives sealed shut, but there was a backlog of 450,000 requests for information from survivors, some of the requests ten years old, with no evident sense of urgency to respond. That visit was a powerful experience. I knew right away that for me there could be no turning away or turning back. But what to do?

I reasoned that the governments needed to have a clear idea of what was in the archives if they were going to be moved to act – as I had been by my one-day visit to ITS. For diplomats who thought about ITS just once a year, and who served on the International Commission for just a year or two, in the absence of reliable information the safest course would always be to do nothing.

But my requests for information regarding the collections met a stonewall. My suggestion to bring in professional archivists and historians to help was also refused. I soon came to understand that the denial of information regarding the contents of the collections was part of a carefully devised strategy to prevent action. At the May 2002 meeting of the International Commission, in Berlin, the Chair (Germany in that year) and the ITS Director made it clear that information about the collections was “restricted,” and that my request was “inappropriate.” Information would be shared only on the basis of a unanimous request by all the Commission countries, and the Chair assured me, before cutting off discussion and adjourning the meeting, that unanimity would not be achieved because the chair, Germany, was opposed.

The other countries on the International Commission were reluctant to press the issue. Some were simply uninterested, and some had been led, behind the scenes, to believe that if they supported the request for a list of collections, ITS would further slow down the already problematic flow of information to survivors in their countries – in the midst of the already hopelessly back-logged processing of claims under recent slave labour settlements. When I asked which countries had enough information to describe the collections to the others, no one responded. When I asked which countries wanted more information, the response again was silence. I was not permitted a third question. When I told one German Foreign Ministry official after the

meeting that this issue would go away, he warned me that Germany would delay action for years by using the issue of privacy to stimulate conflicts of legal interpretation among Commission members.

Still, I hoped that providing a clear sense of the archive's powerful contents would convince the governments and the ICRC that they had a moral obligation to act, and act sooner rather than later.

This approach – so logical from my perspective – regrettably did not produce results, at least not in the International Commission. The ITS Director and the Red Cross maintained right until the end that no list of ITS archival collections had ever been assembled – something we were to learn later was simply a lie. And the State Department, out of deference to diplomatic consensus and not anxious to add another problem to already troubled relations with our European allies, for a long time would not agree even to ask officially on behalf of the United States for information about the collections.

Assembling information about the contents of the ITS archive thus required a significant research effort. Fortunately, my staff in Washington was up to the challenge. We located a four-volume inventory produced by the Allied High Commission for Germany when it turned the records assembled between the end of the war and 1955 over to the Red Cross in 1955. And we located lists of many of the collections that had been deposited at Bad Arolsen for 50 years after 1955 by governments, organizations, and even private individuals.

But the stalemate persisted. The International Commission met for half a day in Athens in 2003 ... and adjourned, leaving the next discussion for the following year!

I spent much of that year pressing for a more aggressive American diplomatic stance. I was accused on more than one occasion of wanting to “toss a bomb onto the negotiating table.” Sadly, when the State Department prepared for the meeting of the International Commission scheduled for Jerusalem in May 2004 – thus three years had already passed – its approach was to hope that someone else would press this issue. The Department's instructions for Jerusalem were issued the same weekend that the new World War II Memorial was dedicated in Washington. I sent a not very diplomatic message to the Office of the Ambassador for Holocaust Affairs in the State Department, expressing my judgment that the American failure to act decisively regarding ITS was:

“[...] cementing the place of our own country as part of the problem rather than part of the solution [...] In the face of a dying generation of World War II vet[erans],” I wrote, “the United States [has] opened the earth and dedicates a granite monument this weekend. In the face of a dying generation of Holocaust survivors, who suffered the full fury of the Nazis and their allies, we are unable to express a bold and compassionate idea to lay open a pile of paper that tells their story. [...] No one will understand our willingness to accept the status quo [...] We would not accept our own inaction from [others...] This will not be a chapter of Holocaust history we will be happy to teach to future generations of Americans.”

I was not the most popular person in Washington the following week.

By this time, I had enlisted the support of organizations I was sure would carry some weight with the International Commission. The President of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Ben Meed, a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto, wrote a strongly worded letter to the Commission demanding open access. “What is the matter with them? Have they no heart?” he said to me. The President of the German Studies Association of the United States, Henry Friedlander, a child survivor of the Lodz ghetto, also wrote, criticising the Commission for planning an access

regime “so severely restrictive [...] that in effect the [...] Commission is serving notice that [...] its intention is to block rather than to provide access.” Neither president, neither survivor, ever received a response. Tragically Ben Meed, like the vast majority of the survivor generation he represented, passed away before he could witness the actual opening of the archives.

Looking for an international audience that might share my concern, I raised the Bad Arolsen issue with the then 20-member-country International Task Force on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research, which met in Washington in December 2003. [The Task Force has just concluded its first meetings under Austrian chairmanship here in Vienna this week, by the way.] My raising the topic in December 2003 was labelled, again, “inappropriate” by the American chair, [I began to think that inappropriate might be my middle name.] but the Task Force’s Executive Secretary was open to the idea of my doing a briefing at the next Task Force meeting, in Rome, in June 2004. This was an opportunity to place the matter before a large group of people, including archivists, scholars and educators, who were committed to addressing Holocaust issues. Moreover, 9 of the 11 countries on the International Commission of ITS were members of the Task Force. They were formally committed, through the Stockholm Declaration of 2000, to the principle of open access to Holocaust-related archives. Could they be committed to open access as members of the Task Force, and continue to obstruct access in the ITS International Commission? This was an angle worth pursuing.

I prepared a “White Paper” for the Rome meeting of the Task Force. The paper addressed what I saw as the key issues and obstacles to effective action regarding the ITS archives. I described the contents of the archive, based on the information we had assembled at the Museum. I addressed the systematic evasion of responsibility for decision-making made possible by the complex set of relationships among the International Commission, the German Ministry of Interior which funded ITS, ITS’s on-site leadership, and the Red Cross. I revealed, for the first time publicly, the massive backlog – 450,000 unanswered inquiries – that existed in responding to requests from aging survivors and the inaccurate responses survivors often received if they ever received a reply. I proposed a set of concrete actions. The US Holocaust ambassador at the Task Force meeting disavowed the White Paper because it had not been – and frankly would not have been – cleared in advance. But meeting participants picked up 150 copies the first day of the meeting, and more the next day. On the final day a unanimous resolution was passed – all 20 countries – calling for the immediate opening of the ITS archives!

The ITS International Commission met in Jerusalem just a few days before the Task Force meeting. Seeking to pre-empt Task Force action, the Commission issued a press release promising to open the archives by the end of that year – 2004. But predictably no action followed.

Some Task Force members organised a group visit to Bad Arolsen. They experienced first-hand the “closed-door, share no information” policy of that time, and I gained some allies. When representatives of the Red Cross and the ITS Director were invited to the next meeting of the Task Force in December 2004, they appeared, but refused to answer any questions about the access issue. A second unanimous Task Force resolution was issued and released to the press, and then a third, in mid-2005.

I could feel the balance finally beginning to shift, and decided to increase the pressure in a measured way. With my encouragement, on May 9, 2005, just before the 2005 annual meeting of the ITS International Commission, a synagogue colleague of mine who is a former investigative reporter for *United Press International*, pub-

lished an article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* entitled “Pressure Mounts to Open Holocaust Records”. His article included comments by Elie Wiesel, our Museum’s founding Chairman, and other outraged Holocaust survivors. The article appeared in McClatchy News Service, not exactly the New York Times, but it appeared online also and was reported on abroad. This was not a devastating media exposé. But more like a distant bark to indicate that there might be a dog that bites somewhere ahead.

Simultaneously, on May 19, *Die Zeit*, one of Germany’s most influential newspapers, published a full-page article by Frank-Uwe Betz, with whom I had been corresponding, entitled *Das andere Mahnmal* (The Other Memorial). Betz blasted ITS’s operation as “an anachronism, a bureaucratic dinosaur” and identified the ITS archives, with its 17.5 million victim names, as a Holocaust memorial that was at least as important as the “anonymous” memorial that was about to be dedicated in the heart of Berlin to the memory of Europe’s murdered Jews. My hope, of course, was to signal that the new Berlin memorial, in which the German government had invested so heavily both financially and symbolically, might open amid controversy. *Die Zeit* reinforced Betz’s article with a lead editorial that labelled the International Commission’s failure to act an “enduring scandal”.

Very undiplomatic. But the effect could be seen almost immediately.

Two weeks later, the ITS International Commission met in Rome under Italian Chairmanship. Members complained bitterly about the fact that the Commission’s business was being subjected to public scrutiny. But there was also a growing realization that the issue of the ITS archives was not going to go away. Vehement, irritated discussion, almost shouting, punctuated by unscheduled recesses to allow tempers to cool, focused on recognition that the Commission would have to announce something! – but what? After all, it had promised action in 2004 and done nothing, so empty promises were unlikely to buy more time. Three countries – Germany, Italy, and Belgium – supported by the Red Cross and the ITS Director, insisted that no decision could be taken without unanimity, and they made it clear that they would not join what seemed to be an emerging, though reluctant, majority view that it was time to actually do something.

My proposal to the American delegation (I did not attend) to seek agreement to making digital copies of ITS records available at other research sites, was rejected by the US delegation as too hot to deal with. Even a suggestion to create a committee of specialists to provide expert input generated controversy. The Chair refused to call a vote, announcing that he would not consider a majority decision “legitimate.” But some delegates became angered by the attempt of a shrinking minority to “abuse the consensus principle” to dictate inaction. When one delegate alleged that deciding anything by majority vote would violate the principles of democracy, the representative of Greece stepped in to remind the group, from democracy’s birthplace, that voting stood at the very heart of democracy.

The Chair tried to adjourn the meeting until the following year, before a vote could be taken, but was unsuccessful. The majority then voted to establish an experts’ working group. While the Chair continued to assert that the vote was illegitimate, France offered to chair the working group. The Director of ITS and the Red Cross liaison for ITS refused to cooperate productively with the working group, but the die was cast.

It was not easy to make real progress. At first it was necessary to beat back heavy-handed efforts to derail the working group from its purpose. Could I really want it to be revealed publicly that someone’s grandfather was a homosexual? I responded by asking whether the question was not itself an indication of a continuation of the

homophobia that had characterised the Nazi regime. Could I really want it to be known that some Jews “collaborated” with the Nazis in camps and ghettos? I responded by pointing out that it was well known that Jews were placed in impossible situations by their murderers, and sometimes committed acts to attempt to save their own lives which we, in hindsight, might question, but that there was no question who the real perpetrators were during the Shoah, and that any effort to transform the victims into perpetrators represented, in my view, a tendency toward Holocaust trivialization and Holocaust denial. What right did anyone but Germany have to the ITS documents? Their original provenance was German, and provenance usually determines ownership in the archival world. I responded that insofar as I had been able to determine, at least half of the documents in ITS were of allied provenance dating from the post-war period; second, that there was a historical reason that the documents were not German property, since they were captured following the defeat of the country of provenance after it had unleashed a genocidal war of aggression; and third, that the claim to ownership of the documents represented the first time, so far as I knew, that a representative of the Federal Republic in any forum had based a claim of privileged status on a claim of his government’s direct descent from the Third Reich. I was chastised for being so “inappropriate,” but progress followed.

Between June 2005 and May 2006, it became possible to clear away multiple obstacles. Doing so took a major effort on each and every issue and frequent, often tension-filled face-to-face meetings. The approach of the State Department was finally changed thanks to the direct intervention of then Assistant Secretary of State Nicholas Burns, whose wife had family affected by the Holocaust. Under pressure, the ITS Director finally distributed some poorly organised information about the contents of the archives, but he kept hidden until the day he was fired the fact that ITS had actually maintained a running list in excel format of most of the collections it held.

Recognising that the town of Bad Arolsen was hard to get to, and to ensure open access with no risk of reversal if a government changed its mind, I pressed again for agreement to distribute copies of the entire contents of the archives to major research centres in other locations. After difficult negotiation, this recommendation, limited to the member countries of the International Commission, was included in the draft agreements finally produced by the committee of experts.

This did not mean that opposition simply faded away, however. On January 9, 2006, a hostile article appeared on the website of ITS itself. It remains unclear whether the text was the initiative solely of the ITS Director or had Red Cross authorization, but it labelled the push to open the archives “legally” and “morally” unjustifiable. Clearly more convincing was necessary.

I worked with a German documentary filmmaker who expressed interest in doing a short television update on ITS. The result was a 15-minute segment on ITS that was broadcast on Germany’s *60 Minutes* equivalent, a program called *Titel, Thesen, Temperamente* (Topic, Theses, Temperaments) in March 2006. The piece was rebroadcast repeatedly on the German ARD network and was immediately available (and is still available) in transcript form online. It captured the resistance of the ITS Director and contrasted to it the desire of a survivor “to know about the fate of relatives,” the anger of the leadership of the Jewish Community of Germany at being deprived of access, and a blunt reminder on my part that “it is generally acknowledged that knowingly concealing the documentation of the Holocaust is a form of Holocaust denial”. Official government notes critical of me and a few published articles critical of me and indirectly of my Museum followed. The most significant response, however, was more positive.

One by one, the countries on the International Commission gave their support to a final push to open the archives – France, Luxemburg, Greece, the UK, and the Netherlands joined at this stage; Israel, Belgium, Poland and Italy only later.

In a final push, I was able to enlist the full public weight of our Museum in what had been my rather lonely battle. The Museum issued a press release on March 7, 2006, calling on the Red Cross to shift from an obstructionist to a cooperative stance. Powerfully worded editorials in the *New York Times*, the *International Herald Tribune* and the *Washington Post*, urged the countries that were still opposed to recognise the moral, humanitarian and historical imperatives surrounding the ITS issue. A growing number of organizations that represent both Jewish survivors and former non-Jewish forced labourers began to express their support. An internet petition drew thousands of outraged comments from survivors, their families and other people of good will from around the world.

Still, there was little evident movement in Berlin, and of course Berlin was key, given Germany's special sensitivity on Holocaust issues and the deference to that special sensitivity that prevailed among International Commission member states. In an animated discussion with a senior member of the German Embassy in Washington, my German friend criticised me, on behalf of "many people," for using the term "Holocaust denial" in the recent German television report and in the *New York Times*. I responded to my friend – and he truly is that today also – in the following way: "Germany should have no doubt. Opening the ITS archive must happen and is going to happen. The train is moving down the track, and gaining speed. The only question is whether Germany is going to be on the train or on the track." I expressed the hope that Germany would join in making the opening a reality. I pleaded for German Foreign Ministry support and offered to share the credit that I believed would surely follow – even to give the entire credit to Germany.

Finally, as chancellorships changed in Germany, Germany's ITS policy changed. This was thanks to the direct involvement of Germany's Minister of Justice Brigitte Zypries, herself from the State of Hessen where ITS is located. Minister Zypries visited the Museum and was open to hearing the case made. Once convinced, she was able as Justice Minister to address the legal obstacles that had been raised by Germany itself and was able to argue successfully for opening the archives with her colleagues in the new cabinet of Chancellor Angela Merkel. In an act calculated to punctuate the policy change that resulted, Minister Zypries came to Washington to announce Germany's support for opening the archive at a news conference at our Museum.

That was on April 18, 2006. A month later, the annual meeting of the International Commission took place in Luxemburg. At the end of two difficult days, with a major effort necessary to gain Red Cross consent, agreements were initialled that, once ratified, would, at long last, open the archives of the ITS.

Some people have asked me if I saw this as a "victory"? Of a sort, I suppose. But, not a victory to be celebrated with cheers or toasts. It was too late for many survivors who had already passed away without the answers ITS may have held for them. Remember, it had taken eight years to get the International Commission's promise made in 1998 committed to paper.

If I add that following that meeting in April 2006 it took an additional 18 months for the 11 Commission countries and the Red Cross to formally ratify the accord – some countries had predicted it would take years, hoping, I am sorry to say, that the process would stall out – and that the ratification process also required constant

pressure, mobilization of members of Congress to pressure their parliamentary counterparts abroad, and painful reminders that survivors were dying at an increasing rate, you can understand why I can only say “Of a sort, too late, and after too much effort”.

Contents of the Archive

So, what was this all about? What is in the ITS archive? What ultimately made the struggle worthwhile? Let me address these questions briefly, and illustrate with some sample documents.

There are six major categories of “historical” documentation at ITS. Category 1 consists of approximately 13.5 million concentration camp documents, transport and deportation lists, Gestapo arrest records, and prison records. You can see entries here for the main camps from which Arolsen holds records, but of course under these main camps there are many various types of records and records of hundreds of sub-camps. Category 2 includes some 8.5 million pages of forced and slave labour documentation, revealing thousands of government, military, corporate and other users of forced labour, how the system worked on the ground, and the consequences of treating human beings merely as assets to be used up and discarded. Category 3, the so-called post-war documentation, contains over 3.2 million original displaced persons ID cards and over 450,000 DP files – often whole family files – from camps in occupation zones in Germany and Austria, from Italy, Switzerland and the United Kingdom, and also resettlement and emigration records on many thousands of DPs and their families. The total document count in this category is estimated at 14.5 million pages, but it is difficult to say for sure, because three quarters of the files have never been opened. Category 4 is the Central Name Index, or CNI, an important tool, providing indications – sometimes quite specific, but very often not at all clear – of where victim names appear in the massive ITS documentation. The CNI alone contains over 40 million cards. You saw one earlier regarding Simon Wiesenthal. Category 5, labelled here *Sachdokumente*, contains collections that did not fit neatly into the other categories – Gestapo order files, cemetery records for deceased prisoners and forced labourers, analytical studies, as well as testimonies taken by American and other liberating forces from concentration camp prisoners asked, immediately after liberation, to describe what had happened to them in the camp, and who the perpetrators had been. This section contains just under one million pages of material. Category 6, not shown on this chart, includes over 2.5 million post-war inquiry and correspondence files, the so-called T/D files. These also are extremely rich sources of both historical and genealogical information.

At the level of the individual, the ITS archive’s records can be astonishing. I am sure you remember Micky Schwartz, Mr. Lucky, from *60 Minutes*. Through a careful search at ITS, one can understand what happened to him, that is, why he survived! Let me show you just some of the documents in the ITS collections that relate to Mr. Schwartz.

- Document 1: Here is his prisoner card from the Buchenwald concentration camp, a card which you saw in the *60 Minutes* segment. The card notes that he is a Hungarian Jew, born June 20, 1930 – thus not quite 14 years old – who was arrested in his home town of Makoshamoczi, near Beregszász, today’s Beregovo in Subcarpathian Ruthenia – once part of Austria-Hungary, and part of Hungary during World War II. The reason for his arrest was “Political – Hungarian Jew”. Schwartz was sent to Auschwitz (noted in first column), and the middle column records him being

moved from Auschwitz to Buchenwald on May 24, 1944. Schwartz's Buchenwald prisoner number 55019 and his identifying badge (an upside-down triangle for Jew, with U for Hungarian inside) are in the upper right. The name of his mother Donia Schwartz, is recorded on this card. She was murdered at Auschwitz and not registered herself. This is the only place where her name was recorded.

(1) REGISTRATION No. **53624**
093120

A.E.F.D.P. REGISTRATION RECORD

Original ☒ Duplicate ☐
☒ Single ☒ Married
☐ F. ☐ Widowed ☐ Divorced

(2) Family Name **Wiegenthal** Other Given Names **Cyla** (3) Sex **M** (4) Marital Status **Married** (5) Claimed Nationality **Polish**

(6) Birthdate **09.1908** Birthplace **Buczacz** Province **Tarnopol** Country **Poland** (7) Religion (Optional) **Jewish** (8) Number of Accompanying Family Members: **2**

(9) Number of Dependents: **2** (10) Full Name of Father **Juller Laizer** (11) Full Maiden name of Mother **Dyk Pauline**

(12) DESIRED DESTINATION **Palestine or USA** (13) LAST PERMANENT RESIDENCE OR RESIDENCE JANUARY 1, 1938.
City or Village **Buczacz** Province **Tarnopol** Country **Poland**

(14) Usual Trade, Occupation or Profession **W.** (15) Performed in What Kind of Establishment **W.** (16) Other Trades or Occupations **W.**

(17) Languages Spoken in Order of Fluency **a. Polish b. German c.** (18) Do You Claim to be a Prisoner of War? Yes ☐ No ☒ (19) Amount and Kind of Currency in your Possession **0.00**

(20) Signature of Registrant **Star of David** (21) Signature of Registrar **EBELSBURG** Date: **8.11.45** Assembly Center No. **64**

(22) Date of Reception Center **8.11.45**

(23) Name or Number City or Village Province Country
Star of David **8.11.45** **EBELSBURG** **8.11.45**

(24) REMARKS

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- Document 2: This Buchenwald personal information card, filled in by hand as a basis for creating the much neater prisoner card we just saw, adds information. It shows that Schwartz was arrested on April 16, 1944 and sent to the transit ghetto at Beregszász (*Letzter Wohnort des Häftlings* – last “residence” of the prisoner), that is Beregovo. His religion is noted as Israelite (“izr.”). So we know from the dates that he was in one of the first mass deportations of Hungarian Jews. In just over a month he was moved from his home and home town to the Beregszász ghetto, to Auschwitz, and then to Buchenwald. Just imagine it! Nikolaus Schwartz was required to sign this card, certifying its accuracy – you can see the child’s signature.

Jude Häftling **Häftlings Nr. 55019**

Zunamen **Schwartz** Vornamen **Nikolaus** Beruf **Schüler**

Geburtsstag **20.6.30** Geburtsort **Makoszanca**

Religion **izr.** verh./ledig/verw./gesch./Kinder **verh.** Staatsangehörigkeit **Ung.**

Adresse der Angehörigen: **Mutter: Donia Schw., Malvin Kalos, Bereg.**

Letzter Wohnort des Häftlings: **Ung. Beregszász**

Sozialversicherung: **KL. Auschwitz**

Verhaftet am **16.4.44** durch **Kripo/Stapo**

In Schutzhaft seit **24.5.44** Im KLDu. seit **24.5.44**

Entlassen/überführt am **nach**

Zahl der Vorstrafen **Art der Vorstrafen**

Jahre Gefängnis verbüßt **Jahre Zuchthaus verbüßt** Strafe beendet am **3.8.86**

Bemerkungen: **Nikolaus Schwartz**

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- Document 3: The next document says something about Nazi record-keeping. It is Micky Schwartz's "Personal Effects Card", analogous to the form given to an arrested criminal when personal effects are confiscated, to be returned upon release. Prisoners arriving from camps in the east, of course, had no personal possessions, and you can see that Buchenwald had a rubber stamp for such prisoners, indicating that Micky brought no personal belongings with him from Auschwitz. Again, the 14 year old was required to sign.

Ung. Jude

Vor- und Zuname: Nikolaus Schwartz Haft-Nr. 55019

Beruf: Schüler geboren am: 20.6.30 in: Makoszaszsi

Anschrifts-Ort: Mutter: Dania S., Malvin Kalus, Kr. Bereg/Ungarn/ Straße Nr.

Eingel. am: 24.5.44 Uhr von KL Auschwitz Entl. am Uhr nach

Bei Einlieferung abgegeben:

Bei Einlieferung abgegeben:			Koffer	Altentasche	Paß
Haar Mähne	Paar Schuhe/Stiefel	Kragenknöpfe	Feuerzeug		Wegpaß
Mantel	Paar Strümpfe	Halstuch	Tabak	Wiese	Bremdenpaß
Rock	Paar Damastchen ^{Hand} _{Leber}	Taschentuch	Zigarren/Zigaretten		Arbeitsbuch
Weste/Kleiderweste	Kragen	Paar Handschuhe ^{Hand} _{Leber}	Fig.-Blättchen		Invalidentasche
Hose	Berhemd	Briefkassette mit	Stichtuch		
Wulst	Winden/Bügel	Wapierre	Messer	Schere	
Oberhemden	Paar Knebelhalter	Sporthemd/Hosen	Meißel/Drehblei		
Unterhemden	Paar Sockenhalter	Abzeichen	Geldbörse		
Unterhosen	Paar Mansch-Knöpfe	Schlüssel a. Ring	Kamm		Wertfächer: ja – nein

Abgabe bestätigt: Nikolaus Schwartz

Offizienverwalter:

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- Document 4: Now the story gets more interesting. This document is the list of prisoners at Buchenwald scheduled to be sent to the labour camp at Dora on May 29, 1944. Dora was the underground complex of tunnels and caves where the Nazis were building V2 rockets and other “super-weapons” that Hitler hoped would win the war. Among prisoners in Buchenwald, the word was that being sent to Dora was the equivalent of a death sentence. And indeed Dora had one of the highest mortality rates of any of the concentration camps. The list, if you look carefully, is a list of children, all Hungarian Jewish children. Look at the birth dates. As you can see, prisoner number 55019, Nikolaus Schwartz, was supposed to be transported with this group of children to Dora, five days after his arrival at Buchenwald (number 11 on the list). But his name is crossed off. Why?

1944. Weimar-Buchenwald, den 29. Mai 44

Transport Dora.

1.	Polit. Jude Ung.	55000	62	Einhorn, Laib	5. 7. 28
2.		55007		✓ Dramer, Rudolf	29. 2. 30
3.		55001		✓ Mendelavits, Siman	18. 10. 28
4.		55008		✓ Lebovits, Filip	14. 4. 30
5.		55010		✓ Israel, Danci	1. 4. 31
6.		55012		✓ Schwartz, Andor	10. 2. 30
7.		55013		✓ Maskovics, Moses	2. 2. 28
8.		55015		✓ Markusz, Moses	10. 3. 31
9.		55016		✓ Frajmovics, Marton	16. 3. 28
10.		55017		✓ Drumer, Abraham	14. 5. 27
11.		55019		✓ Schwartz, Nikolaus	20. 6. 30
12.		55020		✓ Rimmer, Henrick	20. 8. 28
13.		55028		✓ Rosenfeld, Chajem	25. 12. 29
14.		55029		✓ Weisz, Jenö	18. 8. 28
15.		55034		✓ Maged, Samuel	8. 3. 30
16.		55039		✓ Apter, Moses	24. 2. 28
17.		55040		✓ Spira, Morio	1. 5. 26
18.		55046		✓ Strovbel, Sandor	5. 2. 29
19.		55047		✓ Kun, Gyula	20. 2. 30
20.		55048		✓ Eisenreich, Jazlo	15. 11. 30
21.		55050		✓ Adler, Marton	7. 1. 29
22.		55051		✓ Goldberger, Emil	14. 8. 30
23.		55052		✓ Goldberger, Herman	17. 5. 30
24.		55053		✓ Glaub, Ribor	22. 9. 31
25.		55054		✓ Kaufman, Emil	7. 7. 31
26.		55059		✓ Klein, Bela	11. 11. 29
27.		55061		✓ Henslovics, Moritz	25. 5. 28
28.		55063		✓ Klein, Tibor	18. 4. 32
29.		55065		✓ Weiser, Hers	10. 5. 32
30.		55070		✓ Herskovics, Fülöp	7. 6. 29
31.		55072		✓ Lebovics, Zelig	21. 7. 29
32.		55075		✓ Basch, David	27. 9. 29
33.		55077		✓ Kahan, Jozsef	12. 8. 28
34.		55085		✓ Katz, Ignaz	17. 2. 28
35.		55086		✓ Heratik, Belo	1. 10. 29
36.		55088		✓ Spiegel, Leo	1. 9. 29
37.		55089		✓ Pinkaszovics, Israel	2. 1. 28
38.		55097		✓ Frenkel, Marton	22. 10. 29
39.		55099		✓ Klein, Jajos	6. 5. 30
40.		55102		✓ Steinmetz, Jakob	16. 11. 28
41.		55105		✓ Hünig, Abraham	26. 6. 30
42.		55117		✓ Schwartz, Jenö	30. 10. 29
43.		55121		✓ Reingewürtz, Sandor	30. 3. 28
44.		55135		✓ Zelikovits, Herman	4. 11. 30
45.		55142		✓ Feig, Jozsef	2. 2. 25
46.		55161		✓ Glück, Jakob	19. 10. 24
47.		55182		✓ Kertesz, Andre	21. 9. 00
48.		55244		✓ Katz, Marko	29. 6. 27
49.		55234		✓ Drumer, Danci	9. 5. 24
50.		55245		✓ Kallus, Andor	28. 9. 28

- Document 5: The answer lies in another document. Micky Schwartz's infirmary record, or *Revierkarte*. He had gotten sick during the transfer from Auschwitz. He weighed just 35 kilograms (77 pounds), and on May 28, was sent to the Buchenwald prisoner infirmary with a throat infection (angina lac.). He remained in the infirmary until June 17. So on May 29, Micky was not *transportfähig*, (capable of being transported), to use the Nazis' bureaucratic term. They certainly did not want him infecting the other children. (Note that he was sick again in mid-August.)

Pol. Ungar		Name:	Vorname:		
Geb.	Jude			20.6.30	
Nr.	55019	Schwartz	Nikolaus	Makkosjanosi	
Bt.					
Geburtsort:		Einkauf:	Größe:	Einkaufsgewicht (befleitet)	kg:
		24. MAI 1944	144	35	Entlassung:
Krankengeschichte und Einkaufsbefund			Krankmeldungen		
Schüler led.			Tag	Nr. D.	Befund
Seit Kindheit chron. Otitis re.					
(L)					
Krankmeldungen					
Tag	Nr. D.	Befund			
18.6.44		Angina lac.: 6 Tg. Schg.			
25.8.44.		Bauchphlegm. 11., 6 TS			
12. JAN. 1945		Gr. Mandeln-Tonsilliten. Schg 6 T,			
25. JAN. 1945		Schwell. bel. f. H., Phy 5 T,			

KL 42/43 200/00

- Document 6: So young Schwartz remained assigned to his block. Here is the *Appell* (roll-call) for Block 55 on May 31, and you can see prisoner number 55019 listed (next to last) with the notation *KB/Krankenbau*: he was in the prisoner clinic. But why heal a frail 14 year old Hungarian Jewish child?

Juden

Goldman

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Verlegungen am 31.5.44 vom Block 62 nach Block 55
vor dem Appell

54969 Grünfeld	55257 Klinberger	55576 Jakobovic
970 Fruchter	264 Stern	696 Martou
976 Adler	265 Ickovic	628 Weiss
982 Studevic	308 Vogel	662 Rubin
988 Weiss	332 Muskal	677 Kroh
991 Koudur	391 Josef	681 Nadelsticher KB
55004 Sabou	406 Saubel	777 Salamon
009 Lebovir	407 Weiz	836 Farkasch
018 Weiss	440 Veitelbaum	845 Mackowicz
027 Jakobovits	478 Kopolevic	885 Fenc
041 Zapineda	484 Niderman	083 Hoch
101 Zelikovin	487 Hoskovic	019 Schwarz KB
124 Markowicz	523 Neuman	058 Kachan
159 Gaur	575 Rosner	

zusammen 49 Häftlge

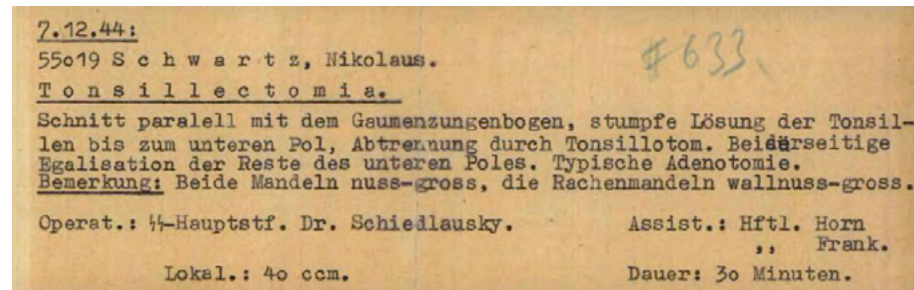
f. 6. 44.

Hl

- Document 7: The answer was at Dora. In the waning months of the war, with fewer adult prisoners available for work, the Nazis sent contingents of children – here, Hungarian Jewish children – to Dora to work in the confined spaces of the tunnels, do menial jobs, and do technical jobs, wiring, that required small hands. So here in late November 1944, we find Nikolaus Schwartz again (top section, prisoner 55019, 2nd name in middle column), still at Buchenwald, but on a list of prisoners to be trained as *Lehrlinge* (apprentices) for Dora.

Blatt V.		26. Nov. 1944
74		
<u>Block 8:</u>		
<u>Folgende Häftlinge sollen als Lehrlinge eingesetzt werden:</u>		
52638 Fried, E.	55018 Weiss, A.	56563 Salamon, L.
54969 Grünfeld, E.	55019 Schwartz, N.	56677 Grünberger, M.
54971 Ganz, Haim	55027 Jakobovick, B.	56758 Szasz, M.
54973 Kupfer, J.	55041 Szapincan, A.	56779 Lebovits, F.
54980 Chajkovic, Ch.	55058 Kahan, M.	56827 Keszler, T.
54982 Strulovics, G.	55083 Hoch, S.	56875 Weiss, A.
54986 Visel, I.	55100 Klein, B.	56996 Ackerman, B.
54987 Perl, H.	55124 Markovits, B.	57144 Huss, A.
54988 Weiss, E.	55237 Kleinberger, O.	57239 Perl, J.
54990 Ganz, S.	55264 Stern, J.	57389 Feher, J.
54991 Loser, S.	55265 Iokovics, U.	57994 Iokovics, J.
54992 Kisselink, P.	55308 Fogel, St.	58753 Feierman, J.
54994 Daskal, J.	55431 Junger, J.	58820 Ackel, T.
54996 Fried, E.	55523 Neumann, L.	58856 Lebovits, L.
54997 Brecher, S.	55658 Weiss, N.	59054 Adler, M.
55004 Szabo, Z.	55777 Salamon, N.	
55009 Lebowitz, I.	56285 Herskovics, S.	
<u>Block 23:</u>		
<u>Folgende Häftlinge sind nicht transportfähig und wurden zurückgestellt auf:</u>		
<u>1 Woche:</u>		
<u>2 Wochen:</u>		
52622 Silberstein, E.	64782 Lautner, A.	67742 Jungfer, L.
57154 Wiesel, Perencz	64963 Havasi, J.	69978 Neuman, M.
58841 Hirschler, A.	67633 Wajsfogel, A.	
<u>3 Wochen:</u>		
56446 Mendelovici, I.		
<u>4 Wochen:</u>		
55403 Rosenberger, E.	68423 Gutkind, M.	
<u>2 Monate - Lagerarbeit:</u>		
56486 Simcovits, D.	56856 Friedman, J.	
<u>2 Monate - Leichte Lagerarbeit:</u>		
	65248 Böhm, Z.	
<u>3 Monate - Leichte Lagerarbeit:</u>		
	63016 Berlin, A.	
<u>Folgende Häftlinge sollen als Lehrlinge eingesetzt werden:</u>		
59221 Müller, L.	66342 Bernieman, Z.	64966 Baum, Sz.
59242 Lebovics, A.		
<u>Folgende Häftlinge sind unbrauchbar:</u>		
	59169 Herocz, F.	
<u>Block 41:</u>		
<u>Nicht transportfähig und zurückgestellt auf:</u>		
<u>2 Wochen:</u>		
<u>4 Wochen:</u>		
<u>2 Monate - Lagerarbeit:</u>		
17909 Amojow, Sch.	63108 Radtschenko, St.	
<u>2 Monate - Leichte Lagerarbeit:</u>		
<u>3 Monate - Berufs- oder Leichte Lagerarbeit:</u>		
	61788 Stachurs, St.	
<u>Dauernd nicht transportfähig und Berufs- oder Lagerarbeit:</u>		
62954 Torba, L.		

- Document 8: Micky Schwartz, however, was never sent to Dora. In December, he was sick again. This slip of paper shows that his tonsils were removed at the end of the month by an SS doctor in the camp. Sick, but still alive! I will come back to this moment.



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- Document 9: On March 22, 1945, we find prisoner 55019 in a labour squad at Buchenwald main camp. Can you spot what is different about this list? The list is mostly Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, some French – no Jews. The Hungarian children are gone, consumed. But prisoner 55019 is still there, alive (middle of row on right, top section), Hungarian Jewish child Micky Schwartz along with the Kozlowski's, Frichet's and Wasilenko's. There are a few other boys from his barracks there, too – Barracks 8. Remember that number. A few days after this document was created, the Dora camp was abandoned by the retreating German forces and the site was soon overrun. A few days after that the Buchenwald camp itself was liberated. Is this the end of the saga of Mickey Schwartz? Not quite! I frequently asked myself as I told this story, "How did he survive after the infirmary in December? Just luck?" That seemed unlikely. Remember this was Buchenwald in the waning days of the war, and prisoners were dying in massive numbers inside the camp and in labour brigades outside the camp. Then a few months ago, a speaker at our Museum told the story of a coordinated effort, in the early months of 1945, by a group of German communist prisoners at Buchenwald to save the last groups of Jewish children who were still being brought to the camp. They had worked their way into the camp administration – after all they could understand German-style bureaucracy better than the Frichets, Kozlowski's or Wasilenkos. And, lo and behold, among the materials the speaker brought to the Museum were photographs that showed Micky Schwartz among those children. Few children who had arrived as early as Micky survived long enough to benefit from this last-moment effort of rescue, but Schwartz had survived, and it seems he owes the fact that he stayed in the camp during those last months, where his chances of survival were greater than on a work detail outside the camp, to the effort of those German communist prisoners. Most of the new arrival children that the Communist group saved were assigned – by them – to barrack number 66. Mickey was not assigned there; he had a longer record in the camp's bureaucratic machinery. But he survived. Here are some of the photos. And here is reference to Barracks 8 ...

MG/PS/G/14

MILITARY GOVERNMENT OF GERMANY
FRAGENBOGEN FÜR INSASSEN DER KONZENTRATIONSLAGER
CONCENTRATION CAMP INMATES QUESTIONNAIRE

55019

Name des Konzentrationslagers
 Name of Concentration Camp Buchenwald Datum 2nd May 1945
 Ort Buchenwald near Weimar
 Name des Lagerinsassen Schwartz Mittels
 Name of Inmate Last First Vorname Initial
 Geschlecht M Geburtsdatum 20. Juni 1920
 Sex Date of Birth
 Staatsangehörigkeit Österreich Glaubensbekenntnis Jew
 Nationality Religion
 Wohnungsanschrift Makos Janosi 12, District Bencsors (Palkov. Pers)
 Home Address
 Beruf Schoolboy
 Occupation
 Datum der Verhaftung 16th April 1944 Durch Wen Gedapo Buchsors
 Date of Arrest By whom
 Ort der Verhaftung Makos Janosi
 Place of Arrest
 Grund für Verhaftung Jew
 Reason for Arrest
 Anklage erhoben no
 Charges Made
 Erkennendes Gericht —
 Court Trying Case
 Namen der Richter —
 Names of Judges
 Urteil —
 Sentence
 Wo in Haft gewesen und wie lange Camp Conc. Buchsors, Buchsors
 Place of Detention Giving Dates
 Einzelheiten betreffend die Haft, im besonderen etwaige grausame Behandlung und Zeit derselben, Gründe hierfür und die Namen der Täter, falls bekannt:
 Give particulars of confinement including any inhumane treatment with dates, reasons and names of perpetrators, if known:
no
 Stellungen, die Sie während der Haft hatten Helping light work
 Positions held during confinement:
 Haben Sie jemals der NSDAP, deren Gliederungen, angeschlossenen Verbänden oder betreuten Organisationen angehört?
 Have you ever belonged to the Nazi Party or any of its affiliated or subordinate organizations?
no
 Falls ja, geben Sie die Organisationen, die Zeit der Mitgliedschaft und die von Ihnen bekleideten Ämter an:
 If so, list Organizations, dates of membership and positions held:
 (Bitte weglassen)
 Please leave blank

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- Document 9/10: On May 2, Micky Schwartz, still identified by his prisoner number 55019, appeared before a panel of Allied officers, signed his name again, this time on a form of the Allied Military Government of Germany, stated that the reason he was in the camp was, simply, "Jew," and that he had been in Auschwitz before Buchenwald. The panel of officers determined that he should be released. Three days later he was free (Final Document: Order for Disposal of Inmates), but still identified as number 55019. He was a month shy of his 15th birthday.

(12)

Lagerkommando K.L.Bu. 22./3.1945.

Veränderungsmeldung.

Zugang:

9946/16 Feucht

27672/8 Ivanow

98720/15 Kulik

98228/15 Baranowski

Abgang:

10193/27 Kozlowski

20703/20 Flenr

10485/2 Adam

52671/21 Beyer

16191/26 Plihal

16241/26 Solnaf

69124/26 Besterex

78575/21 Frichet

8955/21 Majewski

21388/40 Boirot

41276/14 Despirres

32669/8 Danitschuk

27285/8 Pirukow

62997/26 Blazunow

24405/8 Karpow

97414/20 Kowalenko

29458/44 Kogeschwilli

74509/44 Raubinger

101066/25 Parkinkajew

36492/8 Pofitaj

43526/10 Rengod

55019/8 Schwarz

35777/8 Utkin

26296/8 Wasilenko

25564/8 Zabieglonski

35836/8 Zernaczuk

128/15 Lenard

58182/15 Omiljanski

Angetreten am 21./3. 481 H.

Zugang..... 4

Abgang..... 28

457 H.

Sonderkol. 69 H.

28

(12)

Lagerkommando K.L.Bu. 22./3.1945.

Veränderungsmeldung.

Zugang:

No 41276/14 Despirres

97414/20 Kowalenko

29458/44 Kogeschwilli

34588/44 Kepariswili

101066/25 Parkinkajew

43526/10 Rengod

128/15 Lenard

58182/15 Omiljanski

98814/15 Martinsk

Abgang:

No 129515/27 Zgornak

7592/25 Prikazickow

98720/15 Kulik

Angetreten am 22./3. 457 H.

Zugang..... 9

Abgang..... 2

Insgesamt..... 463 H.

Sonderkol. 69 H.

3

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The millions of pages of ITS documentation open a window on the daily fate of millions of people who were targeted by the Nazis and their allies. We see here not grand strategy, as history is so often written, but the grinding routine of man's inhumanity to man, of prisoners' efforts to survive one more day, of perpetrator calculations of how to reap the most benefit from the disposable human assets consigned to their control.

Let me tell you very briefly another story. Haim Vidal-Sepiha is a survivor of Auschwitz. From a family of Turkish Jews which had immigrated to Belgium after

World War I, Haim was separated from his father and brother at the Mechelen transit camp outside Brussels because they had retained their Turkish citizenship, while he had become a Belgian citizen. The Nazis did not send the citizens of neutral Turkey to death camps, but “Belgian” Jews, like Haim, went straight from Mechelen to Auschwitz. Haim’s father and brother were sent instead to Buchenwald, and at war’s end, Haim learned that his father had perished there. But he never knew when or under what circumstances. Without giving you all of the detail, let me show you his father’s prisoner card, death and burial records from ITS. Here is his Buchenwald prisoner card, with the only photo that the family has had since the war of Haim’s father. (The prisoner card of Haim’s brother is also among the records.) But here is a surprise – a death certificate from Dachau, with the date of death clearly recorded as May 19, 1945. Thus, Haim’s father had been moved from Buchenwald to Dachau by the Germans, but had survived the liberation of Dachau, only to die a few days later of pulmonary enteritis. Because he died in American hands, the date was recorded, and here we see a slip of paper recording the specific cemetery plot where he was buried. So please, consider what we are looking at here – 85-year-old Haim Sephiha might have known the *yahrzeit* – date of death – of his father and said *kaddish* for him – and visited his grave. He is a man who was deprived of that by eleven governments and the ICRC for more than half a century, because they felt the material in this particular archive should not be seen. Could Sephiha have asked for information? In theory, yes. He might have been number 400.001 in the queue if he had asked. But did he know there was such a possibility? No. And that, too, speaks to the problem. The issues that swirl around ITS are more than just historical and political. They are issues of compassion, ethics, fundamental values.

Beyond individual fates, the ITS collections offer important new insights into the workings of Nazi regime. Long described as just “lists of names”, we now have a list of ITS collections that runs to over 21,000 entries, and even that list we know is not complete. Some of the document collections are massive: 111,440 prisoner registration documents from the main card file of the Ravensbrück women’s camp, for example; or 101,063 Gestapo arrest records from the city of Koblenz. Others are tiny, but poignant, like the two lists just a few pages long sent to ITS after the war by a former Jewish prisoner at Brunnitz, today’s Brněnec in the Czech Republic – one of Oskar Schindler’s Jews. He was forced to record the arrival first of the 700 men, and later of the 300 women that Schindler saved during the Holocaust. In his letter from the 1950s, the former prisoner pointed out his own name on the list of men and explained that he kept a copy of the lists, despite the risk, because he knew that losing track of someone on the list would mean death. The risk of keeping the list, he reasoned, was less than the risk of not keeping it.

The post-war documentation is unprecedented. The displaced persons folders contain countless immediate post-war testimonies – responses to questions asked by Allied authorities – in which what had happened to people who survived, and what they knew about relatives and friends who they feared did not, are recorded. Jewish Holocaust survivors often poured out their hearts in lengthy statements of what they had endured.

Non-Jewish survivors of Nazi brutality, like Ilya Adjanov, a Soviet Kalmuk, a skilled construction engineer with a Russian wife and five children, are also there. Adjanov’s fate was sealed by his face and race, which, as you can see, was judged to exclude him from immigration to “the Anglo-Saxon countries” and he agonised over where the family might find a place to resettle and start again. Racial discrimination did not end with the fall of the Nazi regime and was not the exclusive domain of the Germans.

The files also contain the stories of perpetrators of varying nationalities, who abused the system to gain DP status, and thus escape Europe and potential prosecution for their crimes. How did some of the most objectionable perpetrators of the Holocaust come to my country, the United States? Part of the answer lies in the records at ITS. Here is the man to whom I referred earlier – the man whose case I worked on at the same time Simon Wiesenthal was pursuing him. This is a picture of Viorel Trifa, who unleashed the Iron Guard Pogrom of Bucharest in Romania in January 1941. Trifa spent the war years in Germany under the protection of the SS. After the war, with support from the Catholic Church, he presented himself to Allied authorities as a concentration camp prisoner. He gained DP status, came to the United States, rose to become the Romanian Orthodox Archbishop of our country, and even delivered the opening prayer in the United States Senate. He was denaturalised and deported by the Justice Department, at great expense, only in old age, over 30 years later.

There is also a file for John Demjanjuk at ITS, in which he declared in 1945 that from 1942 to 1943 he was driving a truck in Poland – at Chelmno and at Sobibor. Had knowledgeable people been able to look at his file, had this archive been accessible, Demjanjuk's post-war fate might have been different. He was granted the privilege of coming to America. The United States is still wrestling with his case today.

The post-war records at ITS show in dramatic fashion how Allied authorities dealt with the post-genocidal situation they inherited with victory – both the successes and the failures of policy in unprecedented circumstances. In a world still plagued by genocide after genocide, there is much we can learn at Bad Arolsen.

Status Report on the Archives

Let me turn briefly to an up-to-the-minute status report.

Between May 2006 and November 2007, all of the International Commission countries completed their approval and ratification procedures for the agreements, the last two being France in October 2007 and Greece in November 2007. Since then, over 80 million digital copies of the incarceration, forced labour, name index and DP card file documents have been transferred to our Museum, to Yad Vashem and to the Polish Institute of National Remembrance. Another 40-50 million pages will come over the next two years.

The receiving institutions have a lot of work to do to make this massive documentation truly accessible. Because there was never an intention to open the documentation, it was not organised in standard archival fashion, there are no archival catalogues in the traditional sense. The digital copying of the documentation, which was started for preservation not research purposes, has not been done in a way that makes it easy to locate or retrieve documents. Nevertheless, we are making progress.

In the summer of 2007, following the firing of the long-time Director of ITS, our Museum was finally able to obtain an inventory of the over 21,000 separate collections of material that make up the ITS archives. We translated the inventory into English and posted a searchable version of it in German and English on the Museum's web site. The list has serious limitations – descriptions are inadequate, the massive displaced persons and post-war inquiry files are barely mentioned – but it is the best tool that exists today through which survivors and researchers can make at least preliminary judgments about what may be in the ITS collections that is of interest to them.

Eventually, we hope to have software that will make it possible to call up all of the documents in a collection and page through them through a link from the collection description in the inventory. But there is an immense amount of work to be done before that will be possible.

In terms of searches for individual names, the news is both good and bad. While the documents at ITS are in the process of being digitally copied, they are not digitally searchable or Google-able. Because copies were made initially for preservation purposes, not research purposes, data basing the contents was never part of the ITS plan. For name search purposes, the path into the collections is the Central Name Index to which I referred earlier. Use of this very imperfect tool requires painstaking effort. In February of this year, our Museum began to respond to inquiries from survivors and their families regarding documentation on their families. Some 7,000 requests have been received thus far, and they are being responded to in about eight to twelve weeks in most cases. If we already have the documents relating to an inquiry, we are providing the inquirers with copies of the documents. ITS is now doing the same – after more than six decades.

Scholarship

Let me turn, finally, to a few comments about the scholarly importance of the ITS archives. Scholarly exploration of these miles of archives – there are over 16 miles of records there – will definitely enrich our understanding of the Holocaust as the defining event of the 20th century. The ITS archives are tremendously diverse. Real exploration of the collections by trained scholars is just beginning.

Last summer, our Museum and ITS's new management co-sponsored a research workshops for scholars, in Bad Arolsen. The 18 scholars from seven countries who participated were divided into four teams and given free rein to explore the major components of the collections. They outlined dozens of major new research projects that would be possible in the archives. Let me share with you just a few of their conclusions.

First, our online inventory of 21,397 collections is incomplete. Some of the participants explored the basements and the attics of the buildings, and found collections that are not mentioned at all in the inventory. They discovered also that in the inventory the size of a collection often was recorded as only as the size of the top file in the collection – so what appears in the inventory as a collection of 300 pages might in reality be a collection of ten files of 300 pages each, or 3,000 pages. This finding is perhaps not so surprising. Until a few months ago, ITS had never had a trained archivist or trained historian on the staff.

The group that examined the *Inhaftierung* (Incarceration) collections emphasised the significance of the fact that the collections covered the entire period from the spring of 1933 to the spring of 1945, that is, the entire period of Nazi rule. Extending this point, it is significant that the ITS collections in fact span the entire period from the Nazi rise to power in Germany through the entire displaced person and resettlement era, to the closing of the last DP camp. Few, if any, other repositories can boast similar chronological coverage of the system of perpetration and its human consequences. The scholars said the material would allow, for the first time, the creation of well-documented social histories of some of the camps and open new understanding of prisoner categorization practices as a control technique.

The group that explored the forced labour records found directives of all sorts, labour detail assignments, social insurance records, marriage and birth records of

forced labourers, infirmary records, company records – thousands of companies according to their quick sweep through the material – with forced labour being used everywhere and by everyone – firms, government, farmers, churches ... everyone. The group produced a list of over 25 categories of forced labourers and suggested a study of fluidity inside the labour system, as labourers moved or were moved from one category to another, with fewer or greater privileges or risks, according to a variety of factors. The group also noted remarkable cases in which forced labourer complaints about abusive users of forced labour resulted in detailed investigations of the users by the SS.

The group that worked in the displaced persons and resettlement material was “overwhelmed” by the research possibilities. They found records on 2,500 camps for survivors, including camps that operated for a time in what became the Soviet zone of Germany, and massive information about the stages through which DP’s passed on the path from prisoner to a future, from “inhumanity to rehabilitation”. The significance of the records reached far beyond the Holocaust, they asserted, to the broadest European and global impact of the waves of people who moved through the camps and on to somewhere else. They noted the potential to add to our understanding of the abuse of the DP system by war criminals and by those who assisted them after the war.

The group that worked in the post-war inquiry files stressed the potential in that material for interdisciplinary studies and the study of post-Holocaust emigration and resettlement patterns, a kind of post-Holocaust geography of the victim survivors, perpetrators, and people displaced for other reasons.

The scholars recommended, in particular, a study of behaviours in the “chronological grey zone” from late 1943 to 1948, when perpetrators, victims, victim families, users of forced labour, bystanders, and then DPs, allied authorities, and potentially implicated perpetrators all lived in a situation of changing prospects and perspectives, and great uncertainty.

As we move from an era when survivors and eyewitnesses have served as the voices of memory to an era when their voices will be absent, the ITS collections also offer an insurance policy against forgetting and unique opportunities to explore the content and geography of memory.

Conclusions

This, then, brings me full circle. Having been moved to press for the opening of ITS in order to make its documents available to Holocaust survivors whose pleas had been denied for way too long, I can report that this has been accomplished. I do not want to underestimate the challenges the ITS materials present. They are substantial – in terms of organization, access, and use – and matched only by the incredible potential these collections have to enhance memory, knowledge, education and understanding.

What is the significance of the ITS story? I see it on many levels.

First there is a moral imperative. We have a moral obligation to the survivor generation to respond to their concerns and to provide individual and family information to them.

Second, the memorial significance of a set of records that identifies at least 17.5 million human beings who were victims of the Nazis and their allies does not require further explanation. These records give the victims identity as individual human beings, not just statistics.

Third, the scholarly significance of the material is very substantial.

Fourth, in the face of rising Holocaust denial, the tens of millions of pages of irrefutably authentic evidence in the ITS collections will serve as a potent weapon against deniers, trivialisers, and relativizers, especially when we no longer have survivors among us to serve as eloquent witnesses to what happened.

Fifth, the struggle required to open the ITS archives, in the face of their obvious moral, memorial and scholarly significance, has meaning of its own. It serves as a reminder, a warning to all of us of the ability even of good governments to disregard or fail to pay sufficient attention to the interests and concerns of people who are deemed to be powerless. Who, after all, could appear more powerless than the displaced survivors of a genocide?

Sixth, these archives remind us of the monumental and long-lasting consequences of failing to act to stop genocide. We live in a world of recurrent genocidal crises. ITS has contemporary relevance of critical importance.

I should also note here, in closing, that while I have criticised the approach of the United States government more than others in these remarks, it is only because I believe that an American has particular standing to criticise American behaviour. I would be much sharper, and the tale would be much more shocking, if it were my place to relate the attitudes and behaviour of some of the other governments involved or of the ICRC. Their lack of interest was in general much worse.

One final note, seventh. The ITS archives send a powerful message and a strong warning about the dangers of resurgent antisemitism. The Nazi regime set out to target Jews. But once ethnic and religious hatred was unleashed by enshrining antisemitism as government policy, the suffering was not limited to Jews. More than half of the documents in the ITS archives deal with non-Jews. ITS thus makes one thing abundantly clear: While antisemitism is definitely bad for Jews, it is extremely dangerous for non-Jews as well. That is a lesson the world has a particular need to understand today.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunity to speak here this evening. Thank you very much for your attention. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.

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