



Recommendations for former forced laborers in order to obtain evidential documents and advice

General recommendations regarding the search for documents

Merkblatt.

Für Arbeitskräfte aus den besetzten alt-sowjetrussischen Gebieten gelten folgende Vorschriften:

1. Den Anordnungen der Aufsichtspersonen ist jederzeit Folge zu leisten.
2. Das Lager oder die Wohnung darf nur in Begleitung einer Aufsichtsperson verlassen werden.
3. Jeder Geschlechtsverkehr mit Personen deutscher Staatsangehörigkeit und mit anderen ausländischen Zivilarbeitern oder Kriegsgefangenen ist bei Todesstrafe verboten. Frauen werden in ein Konzentrationslager eingewiesen.
4. Wer die Arbeit niederlegt, andere Arbeiter aufhetzt, die Arbeitsstelle eigenmächtig verläßt oder reichsfeindliche Bestrebungen unterstützt, wird zur Zwangsarbeit in ein Konzentrationslager eingewiesen. In schweren Fällen wird er mit dem Tode bestraft.

German leaflets for forced laborers have tradition. Here is an issue from approx. 1942.

Furnishing the evidence for the time spent in Germany is an even higher hurdle than the application for compensation itself. The advice in the leaflet of the federal government, just leave the furnishing of proof to the partner organizations or the ITS sounds good, but we cannot imagine that it will work this way. When the ITS does not come up with any record, the burden of proof boomerangs back to the applicant anyway and this surely will happen many thousand times, because the archives there are anything but complete (and well run). Therefore we recommend the following general procedure to former forced laborers who don't own any documents about their time in Germany:

- **Start your investigations for appropriate documents now.** It can be foreseen, that the workload and subsequently the waiting periods at all institutions which are involved in furnishing evidence will steadily increase.
- Try to get an official certificate in your native country first. Almost in every respective country the returning forced laborers were registered cautiously on the occasion of their repatriation. Documents which were taken away from the returnees are kept in the archives of the then secret services in the countries of the former Eastern bloc, particularly the former Soviet Union. These documents must be made accessible to the persons affected.
- If your search for evidential documents has been unsuccessful in your native country, **consult public archives in the place in Germany where you had to do forced labor.** Try to do this as specifically as you possibly can (see addresses of German archives).
- **Simultaneously try to find people in your native country who were in Germany with you and therefore can attest your term there.**

A request to the International Tracing Service should be the last alternative since the waiting periods there are extremely long.

How to obtain evidential documents from public archives in Germany

1) Try to locate the place of your forced labor as exactly as possible

We know that it is difficult to remember the correct spelling of a foreign city or town. For this reason it may seem to be a harsh statement but to locate where you had to work is your very own task. Imagine a German official in receipt of your letter willing to help you, but all you are offering him is the name of a town which never existed. What else can he or she do but pass on your letter to the ITS which means for you waiting for an answer quite some time?

In case you do not know anymore the town's or village's exact name, try to remember the next bigger city and write to its archives. The archivists will pass on your request to the appropriate archival authority.

In case you worked in a formerly German region, please check our **List of archives in formerly German or German occupied territories**.

There are many tools on the Web to help your search, e.g.:

- The **Catalogue of Camps and Prisons** which provides the names and locations of many civil workers' camps all over Germany.
- The **Getty Thesaurus of Geographic Names Browser** which is very helpful for checking the real existence of the name you recall, especially because you can search for the German and the domestic names of towns.
- The **Genealogienetz Geoserver** helping you to locate any German city or town both geographically and politically (explanatory notes in German and English).
- The digitized version of **Ravenstein's "Atlas des Deutschen Reichs"** (Atlas of the German Empire), prepared by the University of Wisconsin in Madison.
- The pages of the German postal service **Deutsche Post AG** to find out the correct postal code of the place you had to work at.

When you have found the right place, write to the administration there. If you do not know how to address a German office like this correctly, just write:

KOMMUNALVERWALTUNG <town's or village's name>
<postal code> <town's or village's name>
DEUTSCHLAND

A letter addressed like this will reach its recipient.

Also check our list of **German archives** whether there are archives in the community you were deported to. If so, it is better to write to them directly than to address the "Buergermeister" (mayor), because your request will be worked on faster. In any case: **You have to beg for nothing**, because what you are asking for as a citizen of a free country is your right, well deserved by suffering during World War II. Be polite but straight and determined, do not hesitate to write again if you do not receive a reply within a reasonable spell of time (6 to 8 weeks).

2) In your letter give all the details you possibly can recall from your stay in Germany

Besides a speedy reply there is another good reason for exerting the brain: Local and regional archives in Germany are able to attest the plausibility of your statement regarding your term of forced labor. They are ordered by their superiors to give you a formal document proving your knowledge about topographic and historic details being indubitable evidence for your term as forced laborer in the Reich. This official letter has to be accepted by the authorities in charge of the compensation in your home country. Neither the ITS nor the "Bundesarchiv" (German Federal Archives) or the "Archivdirektionen" (archival administrations, which by the way merely are administrative bodies but no archives with holdings of their own) can do so because they lack the knowledge on the regional and local scale.

Given the fact that the German records regarding forced laborers are anything but complete (our assumption is that not even 50 % of the Nazi victims will be traceable in contemporary records), this is a crucial point and a great chance for otherwise hopeless cases. For this reason it is extremely important to answer the following questions:

- When and from where were you deported?
- What was the name of your employer / the company's name?
- What job were you given?
- What products were produced?
- Do you remember the street name of the factory or workshop?
- What were the names of your foremen and German working mates?
- Where did you live? What was the camp's address? **Draw a map-like sketch of the factory and the camp** showing the situation and significant buildings (churches, stations etc.) in its surroundings. Please do not feel ashamed if the result does not look like a painting by Picasso. A few lines with short explanations can tell more than a thousand words.
- Do you remember particular events such as air raids? Try to give their dates as exactly as you can.
- Do you remember any other names of streets, places or buildings in town? Maybe, if you dig deep enough, they will be there, sticking to your mind because of their funny sound or because you connect a certain event to it.

3) Attach to your letter as copies any piece of evidence you may have, e.g. pictures taken in Germany, postcards, letters and other memorabilia.

4) Your particulars and address

Please give a complete set of your particulars (names, place and date of birth). For women it is of particular importance to give their maiden names when they were unmarried during their deportation to Germany.

Also please give your complete address including the **correct postal code**. Nothing is more frustrating than a letter returning with the note "address incomplete" or "addressee unknown".

5) Write down the date of your request in the letter head

In the course of passing on the requests from one authority to the other often the envelopes get lost (or the stamps are illegible anyway) and nobody knows since when the letter is circling around.

6) Signature and mailing of the original letter

Sign your letter in your own hand. Do not send a copy, but the original. In case humanitarian organizations do the mailing for you, insists upon this procedure, because it is important to meet German legal standards.

7) Multiple mailing of your request

There is positively no use in sending out numerous photocopies of your letter to different agencies at the same time, even if you had to work in various German towns. Try to locate one place as exactly as you can, write to the authorities there and ask them to pass on your letter to any other institution which might have information on your case.

8) Reference to previous correspondence

When you have to contact a German office again after having received a reply, please refer to its letter by giving the date ("your letter of ..."). The public servant in charge of your request needs the information in the previous correspondence. By giving him a reference you speed up his search.

9) The language of your letter

There is one important question left unanswered: In which language is your letter supposed to be written? Certainly it speeds up the process to write in the officials' language, maybe even using a computer for printing. But **there is absolutely no use in phrases or forms looking and sounding good, but containing no individual information on your case.** So, if there is someone at hand who speaks German, English, French etc. willing to translate your request without charging a fee, it makes the work of the German public servants easier and faster. On the other hand there is no reason for despair if you are on your own formulating your request in your mother tongue. German authorities are obliged to help you, even if they have to translate your letter first.

Obtaining advice

An enormous amount of money is at stake in the course of the compensation process. Many **crooks** showed up both in the native countries of the Nazi victims and in Germany, offering their 'humanitarian' services or their skills as 'historians' in order to get their piece of this cake. **The applicants must be extremely careful and mistrustful.** Therefore it seems important to us to emphasize the following facts again:

- **The application procedure is free.** There is no necessity to engage organizations or individuals for claiming compensation.
- **It is the same about the search for evidence.** All public German archives and the ITS in Bad Arolsen work for the persons affected without charging any fees.

For people who nevertheless need advice, we have compiled the following list of institutions which are absolutely serious according to our experiences:

Belgium

Fédération Nationale des Travailleurs déportés et rétractaires asbl.
val. Seigneurs 6-10
1150 Brussels
Phone: 0032-2-7728575
Fax: 0032-2-7720514
Email: fntdr@skynet.be

Czech Republic

Svaz Nucene Nasazenych Obcanú za 2. Svetove Valky
Post. Prihr. 98
149 00 Prague 415
Phone: 00420-2-6276072

France

Fédération Nationale des Victimes et Rescapés des Camps Nazis du Travail Forcé
6, rue Saint-Marc
75002 Paris
Phone: 01-42-33-36-67

Germany

Bundesverband für Information und Beratung für NS-Verfolgte e.V. (BVNSV)
Holweider Strasse 13-15
51065 Cologne
Phone: 0221-61 2041
Fax: 0221 -9624457
Email: nsberatung@aol.com

Italy

A.N.E.I. - Federazione Provinciale
Fiorentina "Generale Giovanni Rossi"
Via Francesco Crispi 11
50129 Firenze

Associazione Nazionale Reduci dalla Prigionia, dall'Internamento e dalla Guerra di Liberazione
(A.N.R.P.)
Via Statilia 7
00185 Roma
Email: anrpita@tin.it

Luxembourg

Ligue Luxembourgeoise des Prisonniers et Deportés Politiques (L.P.P.D.)
Comité Central
Boîte postale 1424
1014 Luxembourg
Phone: 00352-478-2281

Netherlands

Vereniging Ex-Dwargarbeiders Nederland Tweede Wereldoorlog
Jasmijnlaan 71
7101 ZG Winterswijk
Phone + Fax: 0031-5430-530434

Poland

Stowarzyszenie Polakow Poszkodowanych przez III Rzesze
ul. Turecka 3
00-745 Warsaw
Phone + Fax: 0048-22-413591

Russia

Memorial
Malij karetnyj pereulok 12
103051 Moscow
Phone: 007-095-2006506
Fax: 007-095-9732094

Slovenia

Zdruzenje Zrtev Okupatorjev 1941-1945
Slovenski trg 1
4000 Kranj
p. p. 12
Telefon + Fax: ++ 386-4/2373-553
Email: zzokranj@siol.net