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How to Use the Central German Archives Concerning Research on WW II and the Holocaust in Former Yugoslavia

A Research Guide

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Preliminary Remarks

The following remarks cannot be considered to be an encyclopaedic overview. They aim to show structural paths towards answering the research questions by finding the relevant source material.

As they were written in the summer of 2020, during the global Corona-crisis, the opening hours are not added to the presented addresses of archives.

Bundesarchiv Berlin

<https://www.bundesarchiv.de/EN/Navigation/Home/home.html>

The files of Bundesarchiv Berlin concerning the time of WW II are generally divided into the so-called R- and NS-collections, like personal collections (Nachlässe).

The collections, the reference-no. of which starts with “R” are classical state (Reichs-) administrations like the Ministry of the Interior, the Treasury etc.

The collections being labelled with a reference code starting with “NS” contain special institutions/organisations which are especially connected with the Nazi-era (here on the organisational level of the Reich), e.g.: SS, SA, NSDAP etc.

Three things should be kept in mind if finding aids are used for the R- and NS-collections:

1. The Bundesarchiv offers a central online-based finding aid called *invenio*: (<https://invenio.bundesarchiv.de/invenio/login.xhtml>). It contains several finding tools and is available in German only. A research without registration doesn't deliver as many results as the registered research in the archive itself does. To avoid the danger of using key-words which might be too narrow in their focus, it is recommended to additionally use the written finding registers of the collections being stored in the Bundesarchiv Berlin reading room. Also, the finding aids might give a better overview of administrative structures within an authority (e.g. a department of a ministry).
2. While using the written finding aids, please keep in mind that with the split of Germany into the Federal Republic and the GDR in 1949 there have also been splits of archival collections. Therefore, for a long while after the German reunification there were two finding aids for the western and eastern part of the collection which were reunited following 1990.
Be aware that sometimes there is still ONE finding aid for the former eastern part of the collection and ONE for the former western part and that there are sometimes "reunited" printed finding aids.
3. A large number of documents from the Reichs- and the NS-organisational units were not left in Germany in 1945, but taken to the Soviet Union by the Soviet troops. They are still mostly stored in the former KGB's Special Archive (Osoby Archive) in Moscow. For example, the Fonds 500 of the Osoby Archive contains some parts of the RSHA-documents, which are mainly stored in the Berlin Lichterfelde (reference-no.: R 58). The organisation of Zagreb's Jewish community to help the Jews escaping from Germany between 1933



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and 1941 is, for example, completely stored in Moscow. A good overview is given under: www.sonderarchiv.de

Special attention should be paid to the procedures for finding biographical documents in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde. A three-step-procedure check is suggested in this case:

1. There are the digital representations of former NSDAP's central and NSDAP's district cards (Zentral- und Gaukartei). Both reflect approximately 70% to 80% of the former NSDAP's volumes. One has to be very careful, as the NSDAP-administration had a broad variety of understanding and interpreting the spelling. For example, sometimes "Meyer" can be found under "Maier" sometimes it is sorted under "Meier" etc. "Hans" is often integrated with "Johannes".

2. You have to have a special use permit by the Bundesarchiv before you can use the Personensuche-tool of the *invenio* search-engine. The two principal collections of the Nazi personal files are integrated here: the former collection by the C.I.C./C.I.A. (= Berlin Document Centre collection) and the former collection by the GDR's Secret Service (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, here: Hauptabteilung IX/11 – Z-Kartei).

3. By using the Key-Word-tool of *invenio* in relation to the R- and NS-collections, one can also find personal files and/or documents "hidden" in institutional collections. For personal document collections, one should check in which of the Bundesarchives' branches the collection is stored: in Berlin, Koblenz, Bayreuth or Freiburg.

Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg i.B.

<https://www.bundesarchiv.de/EN/Navigation/Home/home.html>



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The Military Archive has collected Wehrmacht- and SS-documents structured by service branches (army, air-force, navy and some central institutions) and military units. To find out when a unit was at which front one could use the Website of the so-called Wehrmachtslexikon (www.lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de).

It is important to keep in mind that the files of the Freiburg branch are not completely implemented into the invenio finding-aid, especially the military personnel files which are also stored there. Some of the files can be accessed digitally (e.g. some of the files of the 114 ID or the 118. ID), immediately after the search – but one has to be registered to do that.

Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg

<https://www.bundesarchiv.de/EN/Navigation/Home/home.html>

Most of the West-German documents concerning the trials against the Nazi-perpetrators are collected in the Bundesarchiv Ludwigsburg (former “Zentralstelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen”). The so-called East German counterpart can be found in the BStU-archive (see below).

BStU, Berlin

www.bstu.de

The archive of the Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des ehemaligen Staatssicherheitsdienstes der DDR (= BStU) contains papers of the former GDR Secret Service (= „Stasi“). The documents of the Stasi’s central branch are stored in Berlin. The regional collections of the former GDR districts (= Bezirke) are stored in the former capitals of these administrative units (e.g.: Suhl, Neubrandenburg etc.).

For the moment, a researcher has to apply for a topic and will receive files or parts of them filtered by qualified archivists or BStU other staff-members. This unsatisfactory

situation will be improved if the BStU is implemented into the Bundesarchiv's archival structure in the coming years.

Even so, the files that can be found here sometimes contain interesting personal files collected by the HA IX/11. There are also considerable documentations on the persecution of potential Nazi-perpetrators by the GDR authorities.

District- and Municipal-Archives

Although the Nazis have burned many local documents before the end of WW II, a lot of the documentation remained preserved in the district- or municipal-archives (Staats- Hauptstaats-, Landes-, Landeshaupt-, Stadt- and Gemeindearchive). One should particularly keep in mind that some of the files of the Nazi personal-file collection by the former Stasi (see the chapter on the Bundesarchiv Berlin) were given to some district-archives in East Germany.

Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes

<https://archiv.diplo.de/>

This archive has collected nearly all files on German foreign policy. For the Holocaust researcher there are four interesting ways to access the files here:

1. During the Nazi era, the Foreign Ministry was structured into the so-called country-sections (Länderabteilung) or regional sections, e.g. Jugoslawien (Yugoslavia) or, from 1941 on, also: Kroatien (Croatia). Here, one can find relevant material on Yugoslavia.
2. The corresponding part to documents in the Länderabteilung are the German diplomatic representations (Botschaften, Gesandtschaften, Generalkonsulate, Konsulate) in foreign countries (e.g. Belgrade, Zagreb).

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3. The Department of the Interior of the Home Office (Abteilung Inneres) often contains Secret Service documents concerning German spying in foreign countries.
4. Personal papers and diplomats' files can also be found in the Political Archive.

Deutsche Dienststelle – Wehrmachtsauskunftsstelle, Berlin (now part of the Bundesarchiv)

<https://www.bundesarchiv.de/DE/Content/Meldungen/20181221-integration-wast.html>

This special archival branch contains the personal files of the former Wehrmacht- and SS-members.

Photo – Archives

<https://www.bild.bundesarchiv.de/dba/de/>

<https://www.bpk-bildagentur.de/>

Among many other web-sites of non-German institutions, the digitalised collection of the Bundesarchiv-Fotoarchiv as well as the one of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz can be recommended for further photo research.

Movie – Archives

<https://www.filmothek.bundesarchiv.de/>

The Bundesarchiv-Filmarchiv is a good research-tool on all sorts of moving images. It contains, among others, all the “Wochenschau” (the weekly newsreels) after 1945 which are readily accessible.

Testimonies – Collections

www.buchenwald.de



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www.kz-gedenkstaette-dachau.de

<https://www.cedis.fu-berlin.de/services/projektentwicklung/aktuell/zwar/index.html>

Memorial sites like Gedenkstätte Buchenwald or Gedenkstätte Dachau keep a lot of testimony reports in the form of documents, like audio- or video-clips in their archives.

At Freie Universität Berlin one can consult the collection of the former forced labourers' interviews "Dokumentation Zwangsarbeit" which is among other testimony collections (e.g. Fortunoff, Yale and Spielberg) one of the largest collections worldwide.

Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft, Berlin archive

www.stiftung-evz.de

This foundation was and still is responsible for large parts of compensation-payments to former forced labourers and/or persecuted inmates of Nazi camps by the German industrial enterprises and the German State. The archive contains the documentation on these procedures.

ITS-Arolsen and DRK-Suchdienst, branch Munich

<https://arolsen-archives.org/>

<https://www.drk-suchdienst.de/>

These two tracing services are specialized in tracing former inmates of the Nazi camps and/or displaced persons. Both archives might be helpful in order to gain some information on the camps, the outpost camps/commands and/or the fates of the persons persecuted in the past.