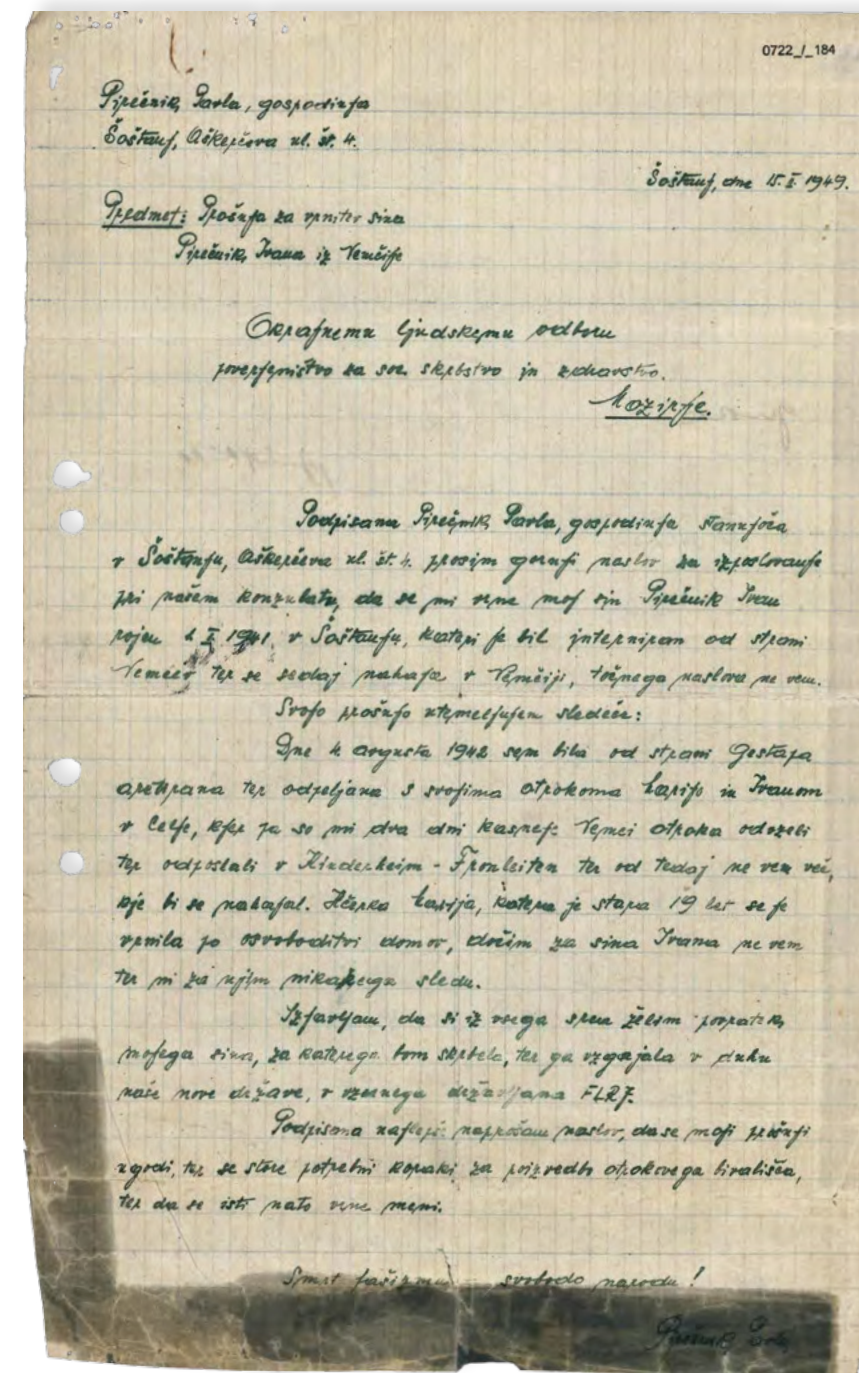


A Focus on Tracing Children and Adolescents

In 1945 the Allies liberated thousands of unaccompanied minors from concentration camps and from forced labor. They also found many children stolen from their parents and given to German families for adoption. For this reason, a special focus was placed on the tracing of children and adolescents from UN states after the war. The ITS set up a special *Child Search Branch* in 1948, based first in Esslingen and then in Arolsen from 1950. The *Child Search Branch* had two main responsibilities: It searched for children reported missing by their families, and it traced and registered unaccompanied children in order to then search for their parents or relatives.



Tracing Inquiry from Paula Pirecnik for her Son Ivan, February 15, 1949

In 1945 Paula Pirecnik began looking for her son, whom the Germans had taken in 1942 and given up for adoption. The scale of these abductions did not become clear until 1947 through the trials of high-ranking SS men. This intensified the search for children. To this day there are victims of the Nazis who know nothing about their origins.



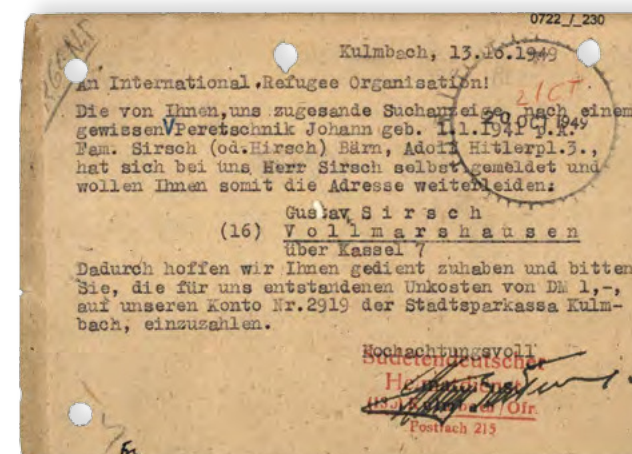
Child Search Branch Employees in the New Offices in Arolsen, 1952

In autumn 1950 the *Child Search Branch* moved from Esslingen into the former SS barracks in Arolsen. The bottom photo shows the reference card for Ivan Pirecnik. In addition to the *Central Name Index*, there was a special *Child Search Index* for children and adolescents.



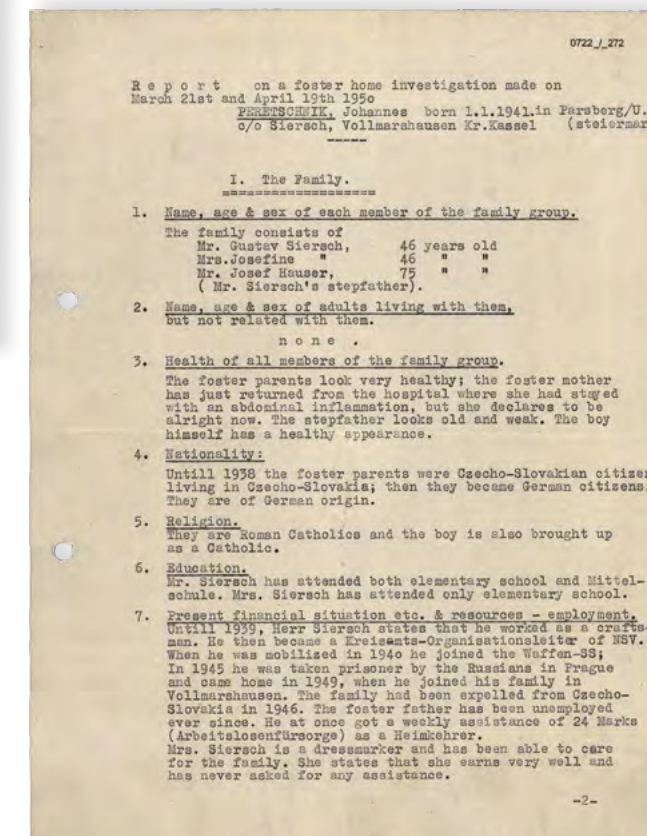
Reference Card from the *Child Search Index* for Johann Peretschnik (Ivan Pirecnik), circa 1952

The data on the card was continually updated. Most of the information is about Ivan's whereabouts, which were only discovered during the search. Ivan was first taken to a "Lebensborn" home, from where abducted children were handed over to German families. This is how Ivan was placed with the Sirsch family.



Information from the *Sudetendeutscher Heimatdienst* Regarding Ivan Pirecnik's Location, October 13, 1949

At first there were few clues about Ivan's location. The *Sudetendeutscher Heimatdienst* published a search appeal and found out that the boy was living in Vollmarshausen near Kassel. If the ITS had little information, it would contact youth welfare offices, local authorities, other tracing services or newspapers.



Excerpt from Carla Hansen's Report on Ivan's Living Situation, March 21 to April 19, 1950

Carla Hansen, the IRO Child Care Officer who visited Ivan, reported that he was doing well in his foster family. She also provided information about the family's background. The *Child Search Branch* worked closely with other IRO offices to find and question unaccompanied children.

Copie

Herrenalb, den 12. Oktober 1949
S.F. 84.374 B.F.M. 507

748/ITS/C8B/1000/77

An den Herrn M I N I S T E R
DES MINISTÈRES DES ENFANTS
Land: WÜRTTEMBERG/HOHNZOLLERN
T ü b i n g e n

Herr Minister,

Ich beehre mich hiermit Ihnen zur Kenntnis zu bringen, dass die Suche nach verschleppten Kindern, die von dem Internationalen Suchdienst durchgeführt wird und zu der die Genehmigung des Hohen Kommissars der Französischen Republik vorliegt, eine neue Phase der Arbeit bedingt und zwar die der Einholung fehlender amtlicher Daten.

Es wird beabsichtigt von den Standesämtern ergänzende amtliche Angaben anzufordern, die uns die Jugendämter, bzw. Schlichtungen auf Grund der Ihnen vom Suchdienst zugeleiteten Formblätter nicht geben konnten.

Eine möglichst konkrete Feststellung der Staatsangehörigkeit eines Kindes erfordert als Unterlage möglichst genaue amtliche Daten bei der Durchsichtigung der eingegangenen Formblätter hat es sich erwiesen, dass bei einem grossen Teil der Fälle, ungefähr 1400 für die Französische Zone, diese genauen Angaben fehlen.

Um diesen Zustand abzuhelfen, beabsichtigen wir uns an die Standesämter mit einem entsprechenden Fragebogen, laut beiliegendem Muster, zu wenden und die fehlenden Daten anzufordern.

Wir erlauben uns gleichzeitig an Sie mit d.r. höflichen Bitte heranzutreten uns Ihre Unterstützung und Hilfe zu gewähren, damit die vorgeschriebenen Termine von den Standesämtern eingehalten werden.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

Jane Z A R R I N S
Le Chef de la Section Enfance
du Service International de
Recherches pour la Zone Fran-
çaise d'Occupation

3 Anlagen

WÜRTTEMBERG

Cercle : R A V E N S B U R G
Commune: BODNEGG

- Pflegekinder, die in einer fremden Familie untergebracht sind
- Enfants en garde

No	Nom et prénom des enfants	Date et lieu de naissance	Nom et adresse des parents	Observations
46	BUCHER Brune	8-3-35 a Ravensburg	unbekannt	Fischer Martin Kriegl Frida Eugenberg-Bodnegg
47	ELBERS Johann	24-9-34 a + Essen	Elbers Johann Essen-Zellig- hausen	Wulfie Ludwig Kumm Josefina Hinterreute- alt Bodnegg
48	FÜSSINGER Michael	1-10-39 a	Füssinger Josef Altshausen, Feyerabend Maria verstorben	Füssinger Anton Weiss Josefa Aisen-Bodnegg
49	GÖPPEL Franz	23-7-36 a Memmingen	Göppel Hans u. Paula, Memmingen	Göppel Franz Zwiler Anna Lechen-Bodnegg
50	HANG Kurt	6-3-36 a	unbekannt	Bentele Josef Sinz Barbara U. Wagenbach- Bodnegg
51	MARSHALL Josefine	16-2-35 a Hubschenberg	Marschall Jo- sefine, Wohnort unbekannt	Fuchs Josef Sphln Paulina Hochstett-Bodnegg
52	NICOLAI Helmut	19-6-37 a	Nicolai Kthe Stuttgart	Geschw. Nicolai Hengenbühlle Bodnegg
53	PILSL Georg	16-8-32 a + Dorfen	Hecht Georg Kammerhof- Bodnegg	Kunst Reinhard Hecht Josefina Kammerhof Bodnegg
54	STAUDACHER Theresia	11-8-37 a Ravensburg	Staudacher Jo- hannes, Her- garten-Bodnegg Wächter Amalie Bodnegg	Pfeffer Johann Gutekunst Elisabeth O. Wagenbach Bodnegg
55	WOJAN Helmut	12-2-32 a + Leverkusen	Wojan Julius + u. Klara, Lever- kusen Krs. KStn	Mayenberger Bernh. Über 7 Baumann Theresia Hochstett Bodnegg alt
56	BEREZNIAK Josef	14-8-44 a Gutmannshof Ukraine	Berezniak Anas- tasia, Mohrhaus Bodnegg	Pfeffer Johann Gutekunst Elisabeth O. Wagenbach Bodnegg
57	BRUGGER Alfons	18-2-48 a Sigmaringen	unbekannt	Hügle Justin Hanser Anna Lampen-Bodnegg

Systematic Registration of Children in Württemberg-Hohenzollern (French Zone), October 12, 1949

In October 1948, the *Child Search Branch* adopted a *Limited Registration Plan*. Ministries and agencies in the western occupation zones were asked to compile lists of all foster children, children in state or private facilities and those who had been adopted after the start of the war.

List of all Foster Children in Bodnegg in the Ravensburg District, 1949

Authorities listed all foster children regardless of their background. Children of non-German origin were then checked and registered by the *Child Search Branch*. One of these children was Josef Berezniak, listed here as number 56.

BEREZNI AK JOSEF 14 08 44 8 959

SERIAL NUMBER	SURNAME	CHRISTIAN NAME	FIRST CHRISTIAN NAME	SECOND CHRISTIAN NAME	BIRTH			CITIZEN- SHIP	ENGLISH IN CASE OF MISS. CHILD	BIRTH CERTIF. NUMBER	NATIONALITY	DEATH	RECORD IN DEATH	NATIONALITY	DEATH	RECORD IN DEATH	NATIONALITY	DEATH	RECORD IN DEATH	
					DAY	MONTH	YEAR													
00	00000000	000000000000	0000000000	00000000	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00	00
11	11111111	1111111111111111	1111111111	11111111	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11	11
22	22222222	2222222222222222	22222222	22222222	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22	22
33	33333333	33333333	33333333	33333333	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33	33
44	44444444	44444444	44444444	44444444	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44	44
55	55555555	555555555555	55555555	55555555	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55	55
66	66666666	6666666666666666	66666666	66666666	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66	66
77	77777777	7777777777777777	77777777	77777777	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77	77
88	88888888	8888888888888888	88888888	88888888	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
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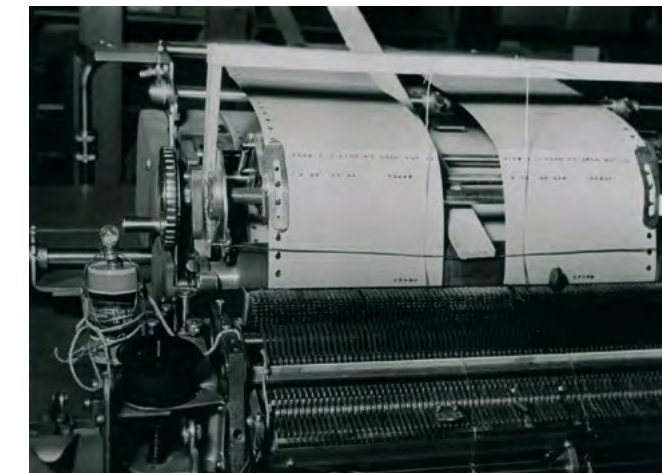
IBM Deutschland, Sl. 22. 8. 49

N. 5746/6

PROTS CHILD SEARCH BRANCH

Hollerith Index Card for Josef Berezniak, August 22, 1949

The large amount of information gathered through the *Limited Registration Plan* was recorded on punch cards. The individual holes represent different pieces of data: for example, the fourth hole in column 60 means that Josef Berezniak was born out of wedlock.



Hollerith Machine, Munich, circa 1950

With a machine like this, a precursor to today's computers, punch cards were produced for the *Child Search Branch* of the ITS. It was hoped that this system would make it possible to record and evaluate information faster.

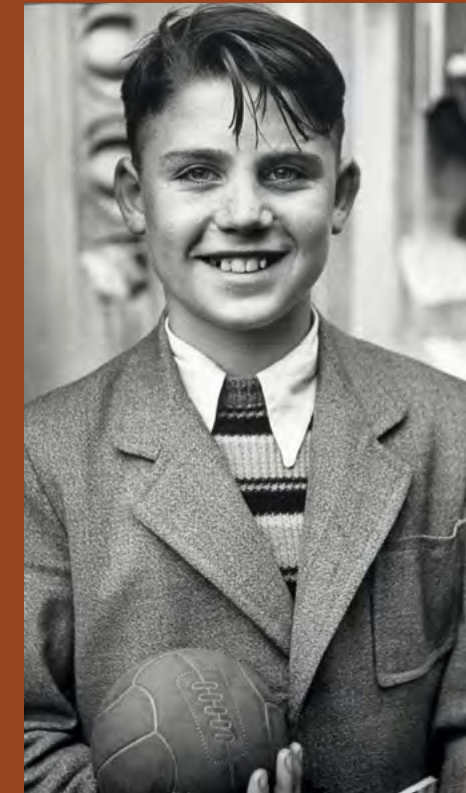
Ivan Pirecnik

1941–1995

Ivan Pirecnik's mother spent over four years tracing her son, who had been violently taken from her by the Germans in 1942. He was from Šoštanj in what was then Yugoslavia (now Slovenia). When the Germans and their allies occupied the region in 1941, they shot Ivan's father because he was with the resistance. They gave Ivan up for adoption without his mother's knowledge. In July 1943 he was given to the Sirsch family and named Dieter. Nine years later he finally returned to his mother in Yugoslavia, where he finished school and worked in a power plant.

Ivan with his German Foster Parents outside a US Courthouse in Frankfurt am Main, 1952

After the lengthy search, Ivan's future was uncertain at first. Should he return to Yugoslavia or remain in Germany? Judges first ruled that he should stay with the Sirsch family. After successful protests by his biological mother, Paula Pirecnik, the judges revised their decision and granted her custody of Ivan.



Ivan Pirecnik, 1952



Ivan with his Mother, shortly before Leaving for Šoštanj, in a Frankfurt Hotel Room, 1952

Ivan Pirecnik was about one and a half when the Germans separated him from his mother. His mother and sister survived concentration camps and forced labor. When Ivan was reunited with his mother in 1952, he spoke no Yugoslavian and had no memory of his life in Šoštanj.



Ivan (3rd from left) with his Former Foster Parents, probably in Vollmarshausen, circa 1985

After returning to Yugoslavia, Ivan initially had no contact with the Sirsch family. He quickly formed a good relationship with his biological mother and sister. He first wrote to the Sirsch family as an adult and visited them in the 1980s.