

MR. KURT ROSENOW
Department of the Army Civilian, Retired (Deceased)

Mr. Rosenow, a Berlin-born Jewish lawyer, immigrated with his wife to the United States in 1940. He was working as a butler in New York when he was drafted in 1943 and assigned to Army Intelligence as a Documents Specialist. The war took him first to Britain, where he worked in the Document Section of G2, Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) analyzing prisoner-of-war correspondence. After D-Day, during the beginning of the occupation of Germany, he moved to Army Headquarters in Versailles. In August 1945 he found himself right back in Berlin.

According to a 1994 article written by Mary Williams Walsh in the *LA Times*, Rosenow, “and a small group of colleagues began going from house to house, bombed-out ministry to bombed-out ministry, trying in each place to build enough confidence among the shaken survivors to make them tell him where the evidence lay.” The evidence they sought were documents from the German Nazi party. And the people gave him what he asked for. Interviewed by Walsh in 1994, Rosenow said, “We were overwhelmed by the mass of paper that came in, before we actually knew what had happened.” The collection of paper “eventually made up one of the most extraordinary archives in the world: the most complete documentation of the Nazi era ever produced.”

After he was released from active duty in 1946, Mr. Rosenow first established, and then became the first Director of the Berlin Documents Center (BDC), where the archive was held. Most of the collection had been prepared for destruction by the Nazis, but had instead been captured en masse when Germany surrendered.

The complex that housed the BDC, still standing today, was a barracks-like complex surrounded by barbed wire fencing. The barracks and chambers beneath them housed an immense telephone surveillance center run by Field Marshal Hermann Goering. Rosenow recalled how eerie it was when the Americans moved in and found the basements filled with eavesdropping devices, the wires all cut. “For months, during late 1945 and early 1946, Rosenow and his colleagues filled these rooms with hundreds of tons of documents – 75 million pages, or enough, he said, to reach eight miles into the sky if stacked one atop the other.” Mr. Rosenow and his section sorted, arranged, and checked 150,000 pounds of captured Nazi Party documents. These files were utilized in the Nuremburg trials and were the key to the entire de-Nazification process.

Mr. Rosenow served as Chief, Berlin Documents Center, until 1953, when the Center was turned over to the US State Department. At that time, he served at Camp King, the home of the new 513th MI Brigade,” in Oberursel, Germany. His final civilian tour was in Hannover, Germany as the first US Army Europe Land Liaison Officer to Lower Saxony. Mr. Rosenow retired in 1975 with over 30 years of federal service to the Military Intelligence community and settled in Hanover, Germany with his wife.

Mr. Rosenow was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1988. He passed away on 4 April 2001.

A very comprehensive article was written by Gitta Sereny in May 1994 about the specific contents of the Nazi archives. Her article, as well as the one by Ms. Walsh, were written as the US government was trying to return the collection to the German government. As would be expected, such a move created quite a controversy. We are fortunate that both of these journalists interviewed Mr. Rosenow and captured his contributions as well as his personal reactions to the work he did in World War II. Both articles are available in Mr. Rosenow's Hall of Fame file.

The following photographs of the Berlin Document Center belonged to Mr. Kurt Rosenow and show the BDC in its early days when it belonged to the Army. Mr. Rosenow gave them to David Marwell, the last director of the BDC, who in 2007 was the Director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, where he posted them online.



Guardhouse at the entrance to the Berlin Document Center compound.



Underground bunker which served as document storage



More document storage at the BDC