

THE WIESENTHAL COLLECTION

Simon Wiesenthal, owner of the Linz Collection, recently transferred to the Yad Vashem Archives, is a survivor of the European catastrophe and a former Jewish resistance fighter.

Simon Wiesenthal was born in Buczacz in 1908 and studied architecture in Prague. Prior to the outbreak of the Second World War he worked at his profession in the city of Lwow. During the occupation period he was detained in the notorious Janowi Camp, but was successful in escaping and in joining the partisans. He was recaptured by the Germans and after a period in prison was transferred to various concentration camps. In 1945 he was liberated from the Mauthausen Camp and took an active part in the organization of the Jewish survivors in Europe and the formation of the International Movement of Former Prisoners of the Nazis.

In February 1947 Mr. Wiesenthal established the Jewish Historical Commission in Linz, the object of which was to collect and preserve documents relating to the extermination of European Jewry, *inter alia* with a view to securing the indictment of war criminals. The Linz Collection referred to above is an outcome of the activity of Mr. Wiesenthal and the Committee he headed, and was transferred in February last year to the Yad Vashem Archives. The Collection includes the following categories of documents: a. Testimony against war criminals; b. Documents on the concentration camps; c. Official documents on the "final solution" of the Jewish problem; d. Other material on the war criminals; e. Questionnaires; f. Card indexes; g. Documentary material on the survivors.

a. Testimony Against War Criminals

This category includes 1,378 items — depositions, reports, personal docketts and photographs classified in files, according to the names of each of 260 war criminals, who either organized or conducted in conjunction with others forced labour, the confiscation of Jewish property, and the extermination of Jews in Poland, Germany, the Baltic countries, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Soviet Russia, Yugoslavia and Rumania. Among these criminals there are a number whose activities were not confined to any single area,

such as the notorious Eichmann, Globocnik, Wilhelm Kobe (Commissar of White Russia during the War years), Herman Haffe (Director of the Reinhard detachment), responsible for the extermination of the Jews in the General Governorate and others. It is noteworthy that the list includes twenty-seven Letts, Lithuanians, Poles, Ukrainians, Hungarians and Rumanians.

b. Documents on the Concentration Camps

These documents are classified in ninety-one files and include orders and instructions issued by Goering, Himmler, Heidrych, other leading members of the Reichssicherheits-Hauptamt (RSHA), such as Muller, Fohl, Lothar Dr. Wehlbrecht, of high ranking officers in the Waffen S.S. and the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht (OKW).

The documents deal with the following matters: warrants for arrest; investigations regarding prisoners from the political, racial, and criminal aspects; the treatment of prisoners-of-war; the internal and external organization of concentration camps; corporal punishment; emasculation; execution; external contacts (correspondence and intimations to relatives of the death of prisoners); epidemics; treatment of the sick; forced labour; escape, etc.

c. Official Documents on the "Final Solution" of the Jewish Problem

The 237 files comprising this section of the Collection include orders signed by Hitler, Goering, Himmler, Burmann, Rosenberg, Heidrych, Eichmann, Berger, Weitzker, Lothar, Avetz, Von Thaden, Hans Franck, Dancker and others.

The material is classified in the following three categories: 1. Nazi policy; 2. The drafting and execution of anti-Jewish legislation; 3. The planning and execution of the "final solution".

The first category includes documents emanating from the top-ranking offices dealing with the settlement of Germans beyond the borders of the Reich, on policy towards aliens, and towards labourers in Eastern Europe, on Nazi propaganda, the organization of the Fifth Column, espionage and in-



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forming within the ranks of the Nazis, racial research and the like.

The second category includes material on the following subjects: decisions taken in Berlin and reports from the occupied territories on racial research; the status of children of mixed marriages; the isolation of the Jews; literary propaganda directed against the Jews; the "Eternal Jew" exhibition; anti-Semitic congresses, particularly plans for the Anti-Semitic Congress in Cracow in 1944; anti-Jewish legislation; the confiscation of Jewish property, etc.

Category three: the documents collected in this section trace the various phases in the planning of the "Final Solution" of the Jewish problem in all European countries. Reports and correspondence conducted between Berlin and the central offices in the various occupied territories combine to form a picture of the deportation of Jews from Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic countries, Norway, Denmark and other countries to the death camps; on the resistance of the French and the sabotage of the Vichy and Italian Governments of the plans to exterminate the Jews.

In this category are also included eight reports emanating from the Einsatzgruppen, the official murder brigades, which operated in the occupied territories of Soviet Russia; a report on the liquidation of the Pinsk Ghetto; two reports of eye-witnesses of the murder of the Jews of Zhitomir and Kiev.

d. Material on the War Criminals and the Search Conducted for them

This section of the Collection includes the notes of Simon Wiesenthal himself on the war criminals in the Dachau, Maidanek, Skarzhislo, Ravensbruck, and Kolomeia concentration camps; on Lithuanian and Ukrainian criminals; on German criminals who operated in Greece and Latvia. Wiesenthal discovered a list of the personnel of one of the Einsatzgruppen. He has prepared a book dealing with the war criminals and a dozen other lists of other criminals who should be arrested or who were arrested and then subsequently released. He has collected testimony against the Wehrmacht (the German Regular Army), on forced labour in the plants of the I.G. Farben, in the Goering Factories, the Krupp concern, in the Labour Camps of Hasag in Skarzhislo-Kamienna, on criminals in twenty Polish ghettos, on the Ukrainian Militia in Drohowitz (Galicia) and important testimony submitted at the War Criminals Trials.

When the former Mufti of Jerusalem fled, Mr. Wiesenthal collected fifteen files of material dealing with his activities, beginning with Eichmann's visit to Palestine in 1937 down to the plan to establish a Jewish-Arab division.

Finally the Collection includes material on the neo-Fascist movement in Austria and the culpability of the Austrian authorities in permitting its revival.

e. Questionnaires

Mr. Wiesenthal conducted a poll among the survivors of the Displaced Persons Camps in Austria enquiring into their origin, experiences, and the places where they were tortured. The results of this poll are 3,289 questionnaires classified in sixteen files.

f. Card Indexes

To facilitate the search for war criminals Mr. Wiesenthal prepared five card indexes dealing with these criminals: 1. classified on the basis of the concentration camps; 2. on the basis of the locations in which the crimes were committed; 3. on the degree of culpability of the persons involved (officers, etc.); 4. a general index; 5. a lexicon of terms dealing with the life of Jews under the Nazi regime, indicating the number of the relevant questionnaires from which these terms are derived.

Dr. A. Bauminger

"CHAZIT DOR BNEI MIDBAR" – ZIONIST YOUTH MOVEMENT IN THE GHETTO OF LODZ

Most of what has hitherto been written about the activities of the Zionist Youth Movements in the ghettos, etc. relates to their participation in the resistance and the partisan operations, which were launched, in the main, during 1943. Throughout, however, these movements continued their organizational, cultural and educational work within the walls of the ghettos, despite the fact that such activity was bound up with no small degree of personal peril. The young people had to beware not only of their Nazi oppressors but often of Jewish spies and other servants of the Germans within the ghettos.

In the Yad Vashem Archives there is a rare document, "*The Journal of Zionist Youth — Chazit Dor Bnei Midbar*" ("The Front of the Generation of the Sons of the Desert"), the source of which is the Lodz Ghetto. This Journal which belongs to the Moshe Kol Collection, chronicles the activities of the organization by the name of Chazit Dor Bnei Midbar, between 30th August 1941 and 1st October 1943. This pioneering youth organization, also known as "Lochmei Hamidbar" ("Fighters of the Desert"), was established in Lodz in August 1940. At the close of September 1943 it merged with the Noar Zioni Aleph, the united body taking

the name Chazit Hanoar Hazoni or Ichud Hanoar Hazoni. It must be recalled that at that time the Lodz Ghetto was controlled by the "President" Chayim Rumkowsky, who regarded all attempts at organization not under his control, and even social or educational work outside the official framework of the Judenrat, as undesirable competition, which he endeavoured to suppress.

At the beginning of May 1940, several days before the Lodz Ghetto was sealed off, some hundreds of young men and women, members of the various youth movements, went out to *Hachshara* (agricultural training) Marishin, near the Ghetto and immediately began to engage in farming. According to Israel Tabaksblatt in his book *Churban Lodz* (p. 91, published by the "Zentral Verband fun Poylishe Yidden in Argentina", Buenos Aires, 1946), groups of young people belonging to the following organizations and parties were at the Marishin Hachshara Centre in 1940:

1. General Zionists — four groups counting 180 members;
2. Right Poalei Zion — three groups with 120 members;
3. Hitachdut-Gordonia — two groups with 130 members;

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g. Documentary Material on the Survivors

The Linz Collection also includes a large amount of original material dealing with the life of the survivors in Austria after their liberation. This section, comprising thirty-two files and containers, constitutes one third of the material of the Collection.

This section includes material on the organization of the survivors camps in Upper Austria with the aid of the Allied Military Authorities and Jewish philanthropic organizations; on the cultural, ideological, social and economic life of the survivors; on the settlement of some of the survivors in Austria; on emigration of the survivors; on the reconstitution of the Jewish community of Austria; on memorial gatherings; on proceedings taken before Courts of Honour against Jews ac-

cused of crimes during the war. This section also includes the exhibition of photographs held in Linz in 1946 and organized by Mr. Wiesenthal.

The period dealt with by this section dates from the first steps made in the direction of self-organization in 1945 up to close to the date when the material was handed over to the Yad Vashem Archives.

The Jewish Historical Commission in Linz collected the documents of the Central Committee of Upper Austria, which at the time of its foundation represented 17,000 Jews; of the Union of Former Prisoners of Concentration Camps in Austria; of the American Joint Distribution Committee; of the British and American Occupation Authorities; of the Displaced Persons Camps in Upper Austria, etc.

J. Rosenkrantz.