

WIENER WIESENTHAL INSTITUT FÜR HOLOCAUST-STUDIEN (VWI)



Research – Documentation – Information

Information Sheet

July 2009

In the last years of his life, it was Simon Wiesenthal's special concern to make his archive accessible for historical research and to be assured that the spirit of his work will be kept alive in a time where both the perpetrators and the victims of the National Socialist regime will have died. For this reason, as early as in 2002 the Jewish Community Vienna, together with numerous renowned institutions, started an initiative to establish an international Shoah research center in Vienna that is to bear the name of Simon Wiesenthal: This "Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI)", in the planning of which Simon Wiesenthal, who died in September 2005, was personally involved, is dedicated to research, documentation and information on issues regarding anti-Semitism, racism and the Holocaust – in continuation of the spirit of the lifework of Simon Wiesenthal. In this center, the *Simon Wiesenthal Archive* is to be combined with parts of the *Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna*.

Simon Wiesenthal left behind a comprehensive documentation with around 8,000 files regarding NS-perpetrators and NS-crimes. These files contain Wiesenthal's correspondence with judicial bodies and documentary centers, with organizations of survivors and resistance fighters and with informants. Another focus is on court files, NS-documents, testimonies and press reports. In addition, the estate of Simon Wiesenthal consists of numerous documents in which he deals with Austria's internal and foreign policy and testimonials of his commitment against oblivion in the form of drafts for speeches and publications.

The Archive of the Jewish Community Vienna is the largest archive of a Jewish community that has been preserved worldwide and is composed of thousands of unevaluated administrative files, correspondence, card indexes and books. Material from three centuries documents the history of the Viennese Jewish community and its members up to the present. Special focus lies on the documents from the National Socialist era.

Based on the unique archival holdings, it is planned to invite guest researchers from all over the world, to carry out international research projects, to organize presentations and discussions, to offer educational programs for students and teachers and to hold exhibitions on a regular basis. Research, documentation and information are to form three pillars of equal importance. Historical issues are to be combined with present ones, the findings of academic work are to be made available to the general public for discussion. An International Scientific Advisory Board with high-ranking members ensures a high level of quality.

The implementing institution is an association specially formed for that purpose by the *Jewish Community Vienna (IKG)*, the *Documentation Center of the Association of Jewish Victims of the Nazi Regime (BJVN – Simon Wiesenthal Archive)*, the *Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance (DÖW)*, the *Institute for Contemporary History at the University of Vienna (IfZ)*, the *Institute of Conflict Research (IKF)*, the *Jewish Museum Vienna (JMW)* and the *IFK International Research Center for Cultural Studies*. In June 2005 and again in June 2008, University Professor Dr. Anton Pelinka (IKF) was elected the association's chairman, his deputies are University Professor Dr. Bertrand Perz (IfZ) and Dr. Avshalom Hodik (IKG).

The City of Vienna had already promised in December 2002 to contribute to the funding of the project with the same amount as the Republic of Austria. On March 12, 2008 – the 70th anniversary of the so-called “Anschluss” – the Austrian Federal Government adopted a resolution on the form and scope of its support for the project: The Republic of Austria (the Federal Government) is going to provide a building at Josefstädter Strasse 39 in Vienna's 8th district for the Institute, which is scheduled to be ready for occupancy in 2012 - the Palais Strozzi. The costs of adaptation are to be borne in equal parts by the Federal Government and the City of Vienna, who are also to pay for one third each of the running costs. The operators are to finance the remaining third with so-called third-party funds to be raised from other financing sources with the assistance of the Federal Government and the City of Vienna.

Estimates of the costs of adaption and of the running costs at the new location require the clarification of various open questions. For the period from 2008 to 2011 a plan by stages and an up-to-date cost estimate have been submitted in July 2008. On this basis a funding contract with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research was signed in September 2008. Another funding contract with the City of Vienna (Municipal Department 7 – Cultural Affairs) was signed by the end of December 2008.

At the beginning of January 2009 – immediately after the 100th birthday anniversary of Simon Wiesenthal on December 31, 2008 – the Vienna Wiesenthal Institute for Holocaust Studies (VWI) started provisional operations. In May 2009 office space for the preliminary phase has been opened at Desider Friedmann-Platz-1 in Vienna's 1st district.

Additional information:

www.vwi.ac.at

Supported by:

BM.W.F^a

Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung

