

Interview with HERBERT STEINER

German

RG-50.569*0022

Tape 1, Side A

[poor quality recording]

In this interview conducted by Peter Wortsman Herbert Steiner talks about his childhood and youth in Vienna, *Kristallnacht*, and his work for the resistance in England after he had to leave Austria. He also gives the reasons for his return to Vienna after the war, and for the motivation which led him to found the Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstands (DÖW), Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance.

000 – 044

Establishment of the DÖW, Documentation Centre of Austrian Resistance

He returned to Austria in 1945; studied the history of the working-class movements and history; proposed in 1962 to collect material from World War II; founded a kind of archive in 1963 to further research and access to material; mentions his publications *Zum Tode verurteilt* and *Gestorben für Österreich*, and a disc in which famous actors read letters relating to the Holocaust.

All of his family were convinced Social Democrats; his youth was marked by social democracy.

045 – 140

Arrest and resistance in England

He was arrested in 1938; escaped to Holland and was arrested there as well; was sent to an internal camp for Austrian and German refugees; friends helped him to go to England; he worked for a printer as a typesetter/compositor in the surroundings of Cambridge; he took a class about archival work in London; was the only foreigner there; helped to print and edit newsletters in German which were dropped by plane; was also the secretary of a foreign Austrian organization; he was again arrested in 1940; communicated with his parents during his arrest; he was released after 6 months and worked again as a typesetter for the resistance; before the end of the war, the British looked for volunteers to drop soldiers from planes over Austria; he wanted to volunteer, but liberation occurred before he could.

141 – 230

Youth and family in Vienna

He was not religious; father was member of the SPÖ, the Social Democratic Party of Austria; he was very close to the social-Democratic movements; his mother was from the countryside; discrimination was part of his daily life in school; many teachers were illegal Nazis;

his father was a decorated officer and anti-Nazi, who was arrested in *Kristallnacht*, Night of The Broken Glass.

Tape 1, Side B

000 – 110

Kristallnacht, Night of The Broken Glass

He mentions fate of family members in Lower Austria; the systematic terror against the Jews; he analyses behavior of the population;

gives concrete examples of Nazis who converted to anti-Nazis following *Kristallnacht*, like Mr. **Massitschek**, an illegal Nazi, the director of the Akademie der schönen Künste (Academy of Fine Arts) in Vienna; he explains the terror against the Catholic Church; analyzes different attitudes of Nazis towards the regime.

111 – 320

He talks about religion in his family and the decision to leave Austria; describes the Anti-Hitler-Bewegung, anti-Hitler movement; he gives the reason for his return to Austria; explains the decision to leave England; defines the word “Austrian”; and his mental connection to Vienna; antisemitism in the world; he describes his impressions after his arrival in Vienna and when visiting former places he had known.