

RG-50.862: EHRLICH COLLECTION - SUMMARY TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO FILES

Introduction by Anatol Steck, Project Director in the International Archival Programs Division of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:

These are English summary transcription notes of the digitized interviews recorded by Leonard and Edith Ehrlich in the 1970s as part of their research for their manuscript about the Jewish community leadership in Vienna and Theresienstadt during the Holocaust titled "Choices under Duress." These notes are intended as a finding aid for the researcher; researchers are strongly encouraged to consult the digitized recordings for accuracy and authenticity and not to rely solely on the notes. As much as possible, persons mentioned by name in the interviews are identified and described in the text; however, as persons are often referred to in the interviews only by last name, their identification is sometimes based on the context in which their names appear within the interview (especially in cases where different persons share the same last name). In case of some of the longer interviews, including the interview with Benjamin Murelstein, unless specifically stated at the beginning of each segment by Leonard Ehrlich, it is not always clear whether a particular interview segment continues in the correct order or, in case the interview was recorded over several days, a particular interview segment continues where the interview concluded on the previous day. It is possible that the individual interview segments are not in their correct order. Leonard Ehrlich and Edith Ehrlich are identified in the summary notes as LE and EE.

RG-50.862.0025 Part 1

Interview with Dr. Emil Lehmann (1907 - ?). Biographical note: Born on August 6, 1907 in Mattersburg, Austria. From September 1934 until April 28, 1938 Dr. Lehmann taught Judaism at the Akademisches Gymnasium Wien. Towards the latter part of 1938, Dr. Lehmann was forced to move from his apartment at Löblichgasse 10, 1090 Vienna to the second district at Herminengasse 15, 1020 Vienna. Records show that he left this address on March 18, 1939 to emigrate to England. [source: "Kurzbiographien der Lehrer die das AKG verlassen mussten" on the webpage of the Akademisches Gymnasium Wien]

The interview is conducted mostly in English with some intermittent passages in German. At one point LE mentions "here in New York" when asking a question which indicates that the interview took place in the New York City area. Interview starts with LE stating "You were telling us what happened on the 12th." They discuss the immediate aftermath of the Nazi raid on the Jewish community in March 1938 when the Jewish administration was temporarily shut down and its leaders were arrested and deported by the Nazis. Dr. Lehmann mentions that he had gone to see Aaron Menczer that day and in the afternoon he went to see Isidor Klaber in his office. Dr. Lehmann states that Klaber was terrified and shivering. He says that he told Klaber that they must do something to help the Jews. Mentions that business man Simon Advokat, chairman of the Jüdischer Elternbund whose magazine *Jüdische Jugend* Dr. Lehmann was the editor of, was also present in Klaber's office. Dr. Lehmann recounts how Advokat mentioned

that he knew Dr. Neubauer, the newly appointed mayor of Vienna, and that he would go and see him. "That is the way the operation began to unfreeze the community."

LE asks about the exact date that these events took place, he suggests to Dr. Lehmann that these events happened a week later and not on March 12th which was actually the day of the Anschluss and not the day of the raid on the Jewish administration. Dr. Lehmann responds that this is possible. Continues to describe the efforts to reopen the Jewish administration. Mentions Emil Engel and the nephew of Rabbi Taglicht.

[11:39] LE states that on May 2, 1938 the Jewish administration reopened and Josef Löwenherz was released from jail. Dr. Lehmann interrupts to tell LE and EE the circumstances of how Benjamin Murmelstein began to work for the community and for Josef Löwenherz in particular. They discuss Murmelstein. Dr. Lehmann states how he himself came to work for the community, that as a Jew he was dismissed from the state school (Akademisches Gymnasium Wien) and that as a result he offered his services to the community; calls himself a "semi-volunteer"; states that he worked for the emigration department while also teaching religion classes; states that he has something to tell LE and EE about Löwenherz but only off the record.

[13:50] Recording stops

[13:51] Recording resumes with Dr. Lehmann talking about the Akademisches Gymnasium Wien from which he was dismissed as a teacher; describes a dispute involving him and a Zionist colleague; his teaching and religious activities; his work for the emigration department; and his emigration in 1939. Dr. Lehmann recounts in detail his arrest during a roundup of Jews during Kristallnacht [Dr. Lehmann refers to the roundup "as a result of the attack on Ernst von Rahm"] and his internment in a local school which was being used as a detention center and where he encountered several community officials who had also been detained, among them Dr. Nachum Blauer of the welfare department; mentions tensions between Emil Engel and Nachum Blauer; recounts what happened to them during their arrest; their interrogation and treatment during two days and nights; their release and return to their work at the community offices which that day were a "mad house;" shares an anecdote [which he refers to as the "Wurstsemmel" anecdote] about Murmelstein that happened that very same day and which he recalls as having had a "traumatic" impact on him.

[30:40] LE asks Dr. Lehmann what work he did for the emigration department; Dr. Lehmann responds that he was in charge of the correspondence; talks about his service in the US Army, his activities in Munich, and how he, as a US soldier, went to Theresienstadt around June 1945 on behalf of Radio Munich to look for his mother and where Erna Patak (1871-1955) urged him to see Murmelstein who was under arrest at the time; how he was reluctant to do so due to what he heard being said about Murmelstein among the survivors in Theresienstadt; that some of the former inmates would have killed Murmelstein had he not been in "Schutzhaft;" EE asks Dr. Lehmann to recount what he was told about Murmelstein by the survivors in Theresienstadt; Dr. Lehmann asks for the tape to be turned off because "I cannot vouch for them;"

[35:03] Recording stops

[35:04] Recording resumes with LE stating that, like Dr. Lehmann, Murmelstein also taught religion in a Viennese high school; Dr. Lehmann did not know this; LE and Dr. Lehmann briefly discuss co-ed classes; LE asks Dr. Lehmann whether he is aware of Murmelstein having warned his students to leave Austria before the Anschluss but Dr. Lehmann has no recollection of such

an incident; EE asks whether Dr. Lehmann knows anything else about Murmelstein's activities in the youth movement; according to Dr. Lehmann, Murmelstein was supposed to have become the "Bundesjugendführer" but nothing came of it due to the Anschluss; Dr. Lehmann insists he had little to no contact with Murmelstein beyond the "Wurstsemmel" anecdote he recounted earlier; calls Murmelstein "a very strange character;" Dr. Lehmann states that he received / purchased 10 British pounds worth of landing monies from the community; talks about Löwenherz's trips to London to meet with the Joint; that he encountered Löwenherz in London on multiple occasions;

[39:08] EE asks whether Dr. Lehmann had any job prospects upon his arrival in England; Dr. Lehmann recounts how he and his sisters were able to emigrate to London and how he was able to arrange from Vienna for a job at a newly established children's hostel for refugee children in London. Talks about the reasons why he did not take advantage of an immigration certificate to Palestine when it was offered to him.

[42:55] LE and Dr. Lehmann discuss the election after the Anschluss; Dr. Lehmann mentions Dr. Öhler who was the "amtsführender Rabbiner" and who was given the task by the Nazis to transcribe the names from the headstones in the Jewish cemetery and who survived the Holocaust; recounts the historical and practical reasons why the main synagogue in the Seitenstettengasse in Vienna still stands;

[46:08] Recording interrupts

[46:21] Recording resumes with LE asking Dr. Lehmann to continue. Dr. Lehmann continues where he left off, recounts what the interior of the main synagogue looked like after the Kristallnacht pogrom; recounts how Dr. Öhler reopened the community after the war and published a remembrance book; that Dr. Öhler died at the age of ninety at the elder home in the Seegasse in Vienna;

[49:00] LE asks Dr. Lehmann what he knows about Stricker and Friedmann; Dr. Lehmann states that he was the religion tutor of one of Desider Friedmann's two daughters; states that he knew Stricker "only by sight;" calls Stricker a "wild man;" discusses a lengthy article Stricker published in the Jewish newspaper *Neue Morgenzeitung*; the reason why Friedmann was arrested and deported by the Nazis; Löwenherz when he was still the "Amtsdirektor;" a Zionist appeal by Löwenherz which outraged Dr. Lehmann. LE and EE state that they do not have any more questions; EE asks Dr. Lehmann to tell them about "this institution here" which she calls "very interesting;" Dr. Lehmann starts to explain by saying "This is the ..." when the recording is switched off;

[55:09] Recording interrupts

[55:10] Recording resumes with Dr. Lehmann talking about his career once he came to the United States; his work for the refugee division of the Zionist Organization of America; how he got a job at the United Synagogue as a field worker in New Jersey in 1941; that he eventually became the director of the United Synagogue; his work for the Herzl Institute; the discussion briefly turns to LE's and Dr. Lehmann's US military service; EE asks whether Dr. Lehmann found his mother in Theresienstadt; Dr. Lehmann responds that he learned from Dr. Ernst Feldsberg that his mother had been deported; Dr. Lehmann clarifies that his mother was not in Theresienstadt;

[59:52] Interview concludes.

Quality: Very good

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