

## Simon Wiesenthal in Linz

Organisation	Time period	Function	Location
Jewish Central Committee in the U.S. Occupation Zone (Upper Austria)	June 1945 until 1955	First head of the political and retraining departments, then vice-chairman, lastly chairman.	Goethestraße 63, from 1964 on relocation to Landstraße 15, Linz
Jüdischer KZ-Verband in Österreich / Jewish Concentration Camp Association in Austria	Presumably active from the period 1945-1947, end of involvement unknown	President	Simon Wiesenthal's private apartment in the Bindermichl DP camp (Uhlandgasse 22, Linz)
International Mauthausen Committee /Comité International des Mauthausen	Probably active since early postwar period, end of activity unknown	Chairman / President	Goethestraße 63, Linz
Jüdische Historische Dokumentation / Jewish Historical Documentation	Beginning of January 1947 until spring 1954	Director	Goethestraße 63, Linz (possibly also offices in the Bindermichl DP camp and at Landstraße 36, Linz)
American Joint Distribution Committee	1948 to 1960	Representative of the AJDC in Upper Austria	Landstraße 15, in 1956 relocation to Herrenstraße 7/2, Linz

Simon Wiesenthal was liberated by the United States army from Mauthausen concentration camp in May 1945. Two weeks after his liberation Wiesenthal went to the War Crimes Office and offered his services. In his book, *The Murderers Among Us*, he remembered that day as follows:

“After the Americans first sent him away, Wiesenthal went back to his barracks and in three days compiled a list of 91 Nazi and collaborator names, listed by camps and ghettos. At the same time as working for the Americans, he immediately began working for various Jewish self-help and documentation organizations. The most important of these were: I went to the War Crimes office and offered my services. I hoped they wouldn’t notice my appearance. The American lieutenant listened to me and shook his head. What could they do with me? He said I had neither training nor experience.

„And, incidentally, how much do you weigh?“ he asked.

I lied. „Fifty-six kilos [123 pounds].“

The lieutenant laughed. „Wiesenthal, go and take it easy for a while, and come to see me when you really weigh fifty-six kilos.“

Ten days later I’d gained some weight. Now I put on some make-up. I’d found a piece of red paper and used it to redden my pale cheeks. A friend asked me whether I was going out to look for a bride.

„Some people won’t like that bride,“ I said.

The lieutenant must have sensed how much the job meant to me, for he said I could start at once, and assigned me to a Captain Tarracuso, a former Russian aristocrat who had emigrated to the United States in 1918 from the province of Georgia. He had taught international law.”

## Jewish Historical Documentation (1947-1954)

The Jewish Historical Documentation (Jüdische Historische Dokumentation) was officially founded in 1947 in Linz under the leadership of Simon Wiesenthal. Its origins, however, go back to the beginning of 1946, when Mejelech Bakalczuk, a Jewish survivor teacher from Poland, founded the Jewish Historical Commission (Jüdische Historische Kommission) in the Bindermichl DP camp near Linz. SW, who had been working for the American authorities as an interrogator of suspected war criminals, joined the Jewish Historical Commission at that time.

In January 1947, Wiesenthal, then already the director of the organization, renamed the Jewish Historical Commission to Jewish Historical Documentation (Jüdische Historische Dokumentation). According to the statutes of the organisation, the primary mission of the JHD was: to collect “documents on Jewish history in Austria, especially from the time of the Nazi occupation, and testimonies of the destruction of the Jews in other occupied countries”.

The Jewish Historical Documentation was therefore a typical post-war Jewish survivor organisation, of which there were several in the DP-camps in the international zones of Austria, Germany and Italy. However, in addition to these similarities, the Jewish Historical Documentation also had a distinct character of its own, mainly due to the personality of its founder, SW, and his fate during the Holocaust. The scope of the Jewish Historical Documentation's activities can be divided into three main areas: assisting Jews in DP-camps (in particular tracing possible surviving family members), tracing and bringing to justice Nazi perpetrators and collaborators (both non-Jews and Jews), and various forms of commemoration (including the design of memorials and the exhumation of mass graves).

The Jewish Historical Documentation operated until 1954. The gradual closure of the DP-camps and the emigration of the vast majority of the surviving Jews made the work of the organisation almost impossible. Many of the Jews who had left the DP-camps re-established families and, for a time, began a new life outside Europe, rather than concentrating on the Holocaust or the war criminals still in hiding and fleeing. At the same time, the mass emigration of Jewish survivors and the beginning of the Cold War fundamentally changed the attitude of local Austrian authorities and the former Allies towards the Nazi past and war criminals. The search for the perpetrators, but above all their prosecution, was increasingly hampered. In Austria, after 1948, the number of trials against war criminals decreased year by year. In the first half of the 1950s, Wiesenthal even believed that the Austrian courts were deliberately delaying the start of trials, waiting for potential witnesses in the DP-camps to emigrate.

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