

Overview of the archives relating to the Resistance kept at the Auschwitz Foundation:
Audiovisual Testimonies Collection and Personal Documents Collection

The Auschwitz Foundation was founded in 1980 by Paul Halter, a former resistance fighter and Auschwitz survivor. With the aim of preserving as many traces as possible and gathering a wide range of documentation for scientific or educational purposes, since its creation it has undertaken to collect all types of archive documents relating to Nazi crime, deportation, the concentration camp world and the experiences of deportees. Its scope is therefore not limited to Jewish victims, but extends to all survivors of the camps, prisons and jails of National Socialism - including male and female resistance fighters.

In 1992, the Auschwitz Foundation began its programme of audiovisual recordings, entitled 'Memory of Nazi Crimes and Genocides. Audiovisual testimonies of survivors', as the Belgian branch of the *Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies* – Yale University. Between 1992 and 1998, the interviews were conducted in association with and in the studios of the ULB Audiovisual Centre. Subsequently, the Auschwitz Foundation acquired its own filming and editing equipment so that it can interview witnesses at their home or own premises.

The Auschwitz Foundation has collected 246 interviews. Of these, 104 concern survivors who were active as resistance fighters in Belgium, i.e. more than 550 hours of testimony. These are life stories in which they relate their experiences before, during and after imprisonment or deportation. Resistance fighters talk about the different aspects of their career: background, circumstances regarding their commitment, types of activities and actions within the resistance. The interviews are semi-structured, which makes their duration highly variable, from one to several hours. The majority of these 104 interviews are in French (sixteen are in Dutch) and were conducted between 1992 and 2000 (75% of them); the remaining 25% were conducted before 2005.

The collection contains the testimonies of well-known figures of the resistance in Belgium, such as Arthur Haulot, Paul Brusson, Paul Halter, Paul M. G. Lévy, André Wynen René Raindorf, Robert Maistriau, to name but a few. It should also be noted that a quarter of the interviews concern female resistance fighters (Marianne Génard-Altorfer, Buntea Crupnic, Sarah Goldberg, Amanda Stassart, Andrée Dumon, among others).

The testimonies collected cover the different aspects of the Belgian internal resistance: armed resistance, clandestine press, intelligence services, escape networks, military resistance, etc. and a large number of resistance networks and movements. However, almost half of the witnesses (48 testimonies) belonged to the *Front de l'Indépendance* and the *Partisans armés*. This is partly because many Jews were active in this movement. The *Armée secrète* is also well represented (25 testimonies), as is the *Comète* network (12 testimonies). A number of witnesses were active in the *Luc-Marc* network, the *Witte Brigade* (seven testimonies each) and the *Rassemblement national de la Jeunesse* (six testimonies). The testimonies also concern the *Zéro* network, the *Mouvement national belge* and the *Libre Belgique clandestine* which are present in four testimonies while *OMBR* and *Beaver-Baton* are mentioned in three testimonies. One or two testimonies concern various resistance networks such as the *Mouvement national royaliste*, the *Groupe G*, *Socrate*, *Martiny-Daumerie*, *Samoyède*, *Tégat*,

the *Armée de la Libération*, the *Österreichische Freiheitsfront*, *Cojudal*, *Kempisch Legioen*, the *Légion belge* and the *Milices patriotiques*.

The recordings are accompanied by a biographical sheet containing factual information about the witness' life. A number of interviews are indexed thematically and/or sequenced chronologically to facilitate research.

The list of interviews from the Auschwitz Foundation Audiovisual Testimonies Collection will gradually be added to the website <http://www.fortunoff-testimonies.be>. The user will be able to find an extract of testimonies, a biographical note as well as the technical file of the interview (place, date, duration, interviewers, etc.).

Following their interviews, most witnesses have entrusted their archival documents, either permanently or, more often, just for the time it takes to reproduce them. These documents are integrated in the Personal Documents of Victims of the Shoah and Nazi Crimes Collection. The volume per witness varies greatly, from a few documents to a binder. In general, they relate to the post-war period: recognition files for Resistance status, membership cards for associations, deportation files, correspondence, certificates and declarations of incarceration, honours, photographs, press clippings, etc., but also memoirs and written testimonies.

The collections are available on request.

Sarah Timperman
Auschwitz Foundation / Remembrance of Auschwitz
Rue aux Laines 17 BOX 50 – 1000 Brussels
Phone : +32 (0)2 512 79 98
www.auschwitz.be
sarah.timperman@auschwitz.be