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**THE SEKTION RASSEN-  
UND VOLKSTUMSFORSCHUNG  
COLLECTION BECOMES THE PROPERTY  
OF THE JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY<sup>1</sup>**

On January 22, 2008, at the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, D.C., the authorities of the Smithsonian Institution officially handed over the collection of the Sektion Rassen- und Volkstumsforschung operating within the framework of the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit (IDO) to the Jagiellonian University. The university was represented by the Rector Prof. Karol Musioł and the Director of the Jagiellonian University Archives, Dr Krzysztof Stopka. Until then, this collection had been stored at the National Museum of Natural History (Smithsonian Institution) in Washington. In accordance with the agreement concluded on July 14, 2006, between the Jagiellonian University and the NMNH, the collections had been preserved and digitised. The costs of the project were covered by the Jagiellonian University and the US Holocaust Museum in Washington. The agreement was the result of efforts initiated by Wojciech Kowalski, the head of restitution at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and then laborious negotiations conducted since 2003 by the Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Washington, with the fundamental participation of Dr Bogusław Winid, the then charge d'affaires and deputy ambassador of the Republic of Poland. These efforts were then continued by the Councillor-Minister Prof. Andrzej Rabczenko. The U.S. Department of State took a favorable position. The contract was signed on behalf of the NMNH by its then director, Dr Cristián Samper. Under the agreement, the original IDO collections had already been included in the Jagiellonian

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University Archives. The collection was prepared and conserved by Beth Schusteer and digitised by Crowley Micrographics Company. The Jagiellonian University Archives were supported in their activities by the heads of the Smithsonian Institution's archives units, Edie Hedlin and John Homiak.

During the hand-over ceremony Rector Karol Musioł decorated Dr Cristián Semper, the Secretary General of the Smithsonian Institution, and Councillor-Minister Andrzej Rabczenko, with the Golden Medal of the Jagiellonian University, whereas Ruth Selig, acting as a special assistant to the director of the Smithsonian Institution, and Dr Gretchen Schafft, who assisted the Jagiellonian University in its efforts to acquire this collection, were decorated with the Silver Medal. During the ceremony, the Rector expressed his gratitude to the people and institutions participating in the project, informing the audience that Bogusław Winid, the Polish Ambassador to NATO, had been awarded the "The Jagiellonian University Medal of Merit".

## **THE INSTITUTE FOR GERMAN WORK IN THE EAST (INSTITUT FÜR DEUTSCHE OSTARBEIT)**

The founding of a German institution with scientific ambitions in Cracow took place during World War II after the Jagiellonian University had been closed down. At that time, the Nazis realised their plan of physical elimination of the intellectual elite of the conquered nation. On April 20, 1940, on the birthday of Adolf Hitler, by the decision of Hans Frank, the head of the Generalgouvernement, the Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit was founded. Frank appointed himself as its president and Wilhelm Coblitz as its director. The Institute was established within the walls of the Jagiellonian University, its branch offices were established in Warsaw and Lviv, and further ones were planned. IDO had eleven sections dealing with a variety of issues. It was conceived as the origin of a future German university, similar to the one created in Poznań (Reichsuniversität Posen).

Employees of German Eastern and scientific centres in Berlin, Königsberg, Wrocław and Vienna took part in its organisation. It played a propaganda role, and in its publications (the most important being the "Die Burg" magazine) it justified Germany's invasion of Poland, referring to the theory of Germany's historical cultural mission in Eastern Europe.

Several sections, mainly the racial section and the ethnicity section, headed by Austrian anthropologists, undertook research expeditions. They were sent, among others, to the ghetto in Tarnów, Podhale, the Nowy Sącz area,

to the Lemko villages. Some of the IDO projects and analyses concerned objectives that the German authorities wanted to implement in Central and Eastern Europe after the war. It was about both economic and ethnic policy: the separation of ethnic groups and the segregation of the conquered population. The German organizers of IDO used the same method as they did for the creation of the Einsatzstab Reichsminister Rosenberg, located in the former seat of the Jewish Scientific Institute (Jidiszer Wisnszafflecher Institut, YIVO) in Vilnius – employing local experts for lower auxiliary functions, necessary due to the linguistic and substantive incompetence of the workers brought from the Reich. The horrible living conditions of the intelligentsia of the conquered nations during the occupation, sometimes combined with threats of deportation or extermination of family members subject to the so-called Nuremberg racial laws, led it to work for IDO. The Polish resistance movement, not approving of the collaboration with the occupants, used this fact to gain knowledge about the planned directions of the occupant's activities in the field of social, economic and racial policy, to organize secret Polish education under the protection of IDO structures, and to protect Polish cultural resources exported to Germany or destroyed. The historiographical controversies surrounding IDO are summarized in the work by Dr Teresa Bałuk-Ulewicz, a researcher from Cracow, under the title *Wyzwolić się z błędnego koła. Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit w świetle dokumentów Armii Krajowej a materiałów zachowanych w Polsce* (To Get Liberated from a Vicious Circle. The Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in light of the documents by the Home Army and the materials preserved in Poland) (2004).

## A CONVOLUTED HISTORY OF THE IDO COLLECTIONS

In mid-1944, when news came from the eastern front about the defeats of the German army, director Coblitz ordered the evacuation of the IDO collections. They were hidden in two Bavarian castles: Zandt and Miltach. What remained of IDO after the war on the territory of the Polish state became part of the collection of several Polish archival institutions: the Jagiellonian University Archives, the State Archives in Cracow, the Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland (now the Institute of National Remembrance) and the Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw.

When Bavaria was occupied by the American army, IDO's collections were transported to the USA under the control of the Department of War. In

February 1947, the Medical Intelligence Section of the United States' Surgeon General's Office, the institution that kept the IDO crates, handed over seven crates to the Smithsonian Institution in Washington.

Two or three of the boxes containing IDO personnel files were later withdrawn and deposited in the Alexandria military fort's warehouses. They seem to have been taken care of by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), a US central archive institution. In 1951, the IDO documentation, which was at the disposal of the NARA, was issued to the Federal Republic of Germany, at the request of its government, together with other archives of the Reich, previously microfilmed. In Germany, this part of the IDO collection was deposited at the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz and then moved in 1996 to the new premises in Berlin, where it is held under the number R 521V (Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit). There is another important group of documents in the Berlin Bundesarchiv concerning IDO: Bericht über den Aufbau und die Forschungsaufgaben des Institut für Deutsche Ostarbeit in Zandt und Miltach vom 3. Februar 1945 (R 52II, Kanzlei des Generalgouverneurs team, file 173).

In 1947 and 1962, three collections of slides and military maps were separated from the IDO collection held at the Smithsonian Institution and donated to other US public institutions. The maps were finally placed in the Library of Congress (Division of Maps). 581 slides with ethnological content came into the possession of the Museum of History of Technology, Division of Cultural History (currently: the National Museum of American History). Their fate is unknown. 86 slides of works of art (which may be pictures robbed from Polish collections) sent to the National Collection of Fine Art, from there to the National Gallery of Art, and then to the Dumbarton Oaks Scholarship and Research Centre, have disappeared. They were probably borrowed by a researcher working at Dumbarton Oaks, who was then a lecturer at the Harvard University.

In 1998, the management of this Smithsonian Institution's agency, which held the IDO collection – the National Anthropological Archives – requested an expert's opinion from two researchers: Dr Gretchen E. Schafft, an anthropologist at the American University, and Gerhard Zeidler, a retired archivist at KZ Gedenkstätte Mittelbau-Dora Nordhausen (Germany). After getting acquainted with the collection, Schafft wrote a book *From Racism to Genocide. Anthropology in the Third Reich* (2004), Polish translation: *Od rasizmu do ludobójstwa. Antropologia w Trzeciej Rzeszy* (2006).

## THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF THE LEGACY OF THE IDO ARCHIVE

The IDO collection is not a simple collection of research materials that are produced by typical scientific institutions. It is the result of activities that appear to be scientific, but have criminal goals and methods. The observations recorded and the materials collected were created in a special situation. The objects of IDO's research were people and communities sentenced to death by the occupation authorities, both individually and in groups: the population of Jewish ghettos just before their liquidation, the fighters of the Polish Resistance Movement on the eve of their execution, and even the bodies of the victims of murders and medical experiments. The rural population was "examined" under coercion. An account by an Austrian organizer of racial "research" in the Lemko village of Hańczowa, quoted by Schafft, has been preserved: "The resistance from a part of the community was again very strong, so we could only work with the help of the border police and the police. Of course, a was half alive with rage...". Dr Schafft asks whether it would be ethical today to use the results of IDO's work to continue anthropological research, for example. One thing is clear: IDO's collections are an important historical message about the war, the occupation, extermination, and martyrdom that carries an important message to today's world. Contrary to the intentions of the organizers of IDO, its materials may help to consolidate those cultures that the Third Reich wanted to dominate, segregate, and finally completely eliminate.

## A PLANNED EXPOSITION

After the necessary technical activities related to the inclusion of the collection in the Jagiellonian University Archives, it will be made available to researchers. The archives plan to prepare a temporary exhibition in 2008 illustrating the history of IDO, shown against the background of the circumstances of the time and place, i.e. The German occupation and the tragic fate of the Jagiellonian University and its employees. The management of the Jagiellonian University Archives will strive to ensure that the Polish part of these dispersed IDO collections will be integrated in the form of originals, while those parts which remain outside Cracow and Poland will be integrated at least in the form of copies. This will facilitate the work of researchers interested in this issue and will be a documentation of the University's history during the occupation.