

1/1/91

Mr. Peggy Adler Robohn
75 Lawson Drive
Madison, CT 06443

Dear Peggy,

If I didn't thank you for the attractive card and the appreciated comment on it, may I, belatedly?

The enclosed pages 276-7 are from Simon Wiesenthal's Justice Not Vengeance. Not remembering if I ever knew, whether there was a Reinhard in George's family I take no chance and send it to you on the chance there is a kinship.

Particularly because some in the FBI, as I recall, suspected that George was a Nazi spy. If I remember correctly.

This is the only one of Wiesenthal's books I've seen and I've not finished with it. But I did check the index and this is the only Mohrenschildt entry. But without the "t," if that makes a difference.

If it is of interest, the American publisher is Grove Weidenfeld and there is a Simon Wiesenthal foundation in Los Angeles. He has written six non-fiction books and a novel.

The best year possible to you and yours, and us,

Harold

of thousands of Jews to the extermination camps of Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec and Majdanek. In addition, he had personally and with full responsibility directed the deportation of the Warsaw ghetto to the Treblinka extermination camp.

To this end Höffle had on 22 July 1942 summoned the Jewish Council and issued orders for all Jews resident in Warsaw to present themselves at assembly points. Only the members of the Jewish Council, their Jewish staff, as well as Jews needed at the hospital or in German enterprises were exempted. Cynically, as always, the Jews were invited to take with them food for three days, as well as baggage up to fifteen kilograms and, in particular, their valuables. These were immediately taken from them at the extermination camps and dispatched by the truckload to Berlin, unless of course they were stolen by the camp guards.

Every day, the Jewish Council was instructed, 6000 Jews had to present themselves at the shipment point. Anyone resisting or refusing was to be shot out of hand. The operation ran until 6 October 1942. By that date the population of the Warsaw ghetto had been reduced by 310,000. There is no precise breakdown on how many were shot and how many gassed. Höffle personally took part in the shootings. He himself on 5 November 1943 recorded his participation in the operation 'Harvest Festival', a mass shooting in the district of Lublin with the following note: 'Result of Harvest Festival 15,000'. Against this figure the 4674 Poles killed in the same area as part of a resettlement operation represent almost a negligible quantity.

Höffle's comment on the charges against him runs as follows: 'The clear-out operation, at least so long as I was in command ... proceeded entirely smoothly, unbloodily and humanely. I saw no atrocities of any kind against the Jewish persons to be evacuated, let alone murders ... Nor only did I not commit any atrocities myself ... but I did not witness atrocities or murders by other members of the SS. Nor did I hear of any such actions, not even as a rumour. If nevertheless ... atrocities or even murders were committed against Jewish persons, then this was done without my knowledge and against my orders, and so secretly that it remained hidden from me.' Nor did he realize 'that the Jewish persons to be evacuated' were earmarked 'for death in the extermination camps'. That such extermination camps existed had 'neither been disclosed [to him] by superiors nor reported by subordinates'. These camps had not even 'existed in the rumours which came to [his] ears'. As for gassings and shootings, he, Höffle, chief of staff of Operation Reinhard, had only learned of them from the press after the war. Perhaps in connection with the Eichmann trial: on 31 May 1960 Eichmann told his interrogator, the Israeli police captain Avner Less, that in the summer of 1942, when he was visiting Lublin, he had been conducted

by Höffle through the extermination camps to form a picture for him of their operation.

In all the Höffle file eventually covered eighteen volumes, each of the of about 500 pages. The number of victims of Operation Reinhard assigned to it was then estimated at one and a half million; present estimates tend to put it at over two million. I had certain doubts – I believe, justified doubts – that the Salzburg prosecutor's office would be up to a task of such magnitude. Even more I feared the Salzburg climate: Austria's reputation would suffer irremediable damage if a Salzburg jury were react to this murder of millions of people with an acquittal.

At the beginning of December 1961 I therefore called Dr Warbinek the Ministry of Justice in Vienna, requesting him to have the Höffle case delegated from Salzburg to Vienna, considering that there were in Vienna two public prosecutors with a training in contemporary history and a intimate acquaintance with the field of Nazi crimes, Dr Coca and I Breycha. The Salzburg public prosecutor and the Salzburg investigator judge thought on much the same lines; they stated that they would collapse under the weight of the documents. But Minister of Justice Christia Broda was against any such delegation. His attitude only changed when transpired that Höffle was enjoying countless privileges while in detention in Salzburg. He was allowed repeated visits from his old comrades, who conferred on how they might help their former chief. Apart from Jürgen Lassmann and Reinhard von Mohrenschildt we were also given the name of a visitor called 'Aunt Berta', who in reality was Höffle's personal secretary in Lublin and Warsaw, Berta Gotschalk. When she was questioned by the authorities she said exactly what Höffle wanted to hear: she knew nothing about the deportation of Jews, any more than she did about their further fate. So the file went to Vienna after all. The Ministry of Justice nominated Public Prosecutor Dr Coca to handle the case.

One day I was talking to the president of the Salzburg Jewish community Hermann Einzinger, when the conversation turned to the Höffle case. 'A good thing,' I remarked, 'that Höffle will now be facing trial in Vienna.' 'What do you mean?' Einzinger asked in surprise. 'Surely he continues to be held in Salzburg.'

At first I couldn't believe it, but it really was true: the file had been transferred to Vienna, but the 'enclosure', Höffle, had been overlooked. I approached the chief of the Vienna prosecutor's office, Court Counsellor Mayer-Maly, and he questioned Public Prosecutor Dr Coca as to how this oversight could have occurred. Coca's answer is typical of the conditions in which the trials of Nazis were prepared in Austria: he had been so swamped with work that he hadn't got round to questioning Höffle in