

## Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

### OSI slander machine strikes again

*Behind the "Waldheim treatment" Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal got on German TV, may lie a larger strategic aim.*

Certain things are taboo on German television, like attacks on a prominent Israeli, or on German or foreign citizens of the Jewish faith. The more spectacular, therefore, was an affair that occurred Feb. 8, when the national First Channel TV's Panorama political magazine ran a 21-minute special of attacks on Simon Wiesenthal, the renowned Nazi-hunter based in Vienna.

The joint production between the German journalist Volker Steinhoff and the American John Goetz featured spokesmen from the World Jewish Congress (WJC), the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) of the U.S. Department of Justice, and Israel's foreign intelligence service, the Mossad.

The OSI's Eli Rosenbaum called Wiesenthal's reputation as an anti-Nazi fighter a myth: "He is incompetent, egomaniacal, a source of false information. He has betrayed the survivors." Rosenbaum charged Wiesenthal with having made possible the 1986 election of Kurt Waldheim as President of Austria, by discrediting the international campaign to accuse Waldheim of war crimes.

The Panorama team also presented Elan Steinberg of the WJC, the former head of the Mossad, Isser Harel, and Rafi Eitan (the man who in 1960 abducted Adolf Eichmann and brought him to Israel), issuing similar charges against Wiesenthal's role in the search for Eichmann and other Nazis who went underground after 1945.

Simon Wiesenthal promptly received telegrams of support against these allegations, from spokesmen of the Jewish communities and institutions internationally. Marvin Hier, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, called the WJC "jeal-

ous" of Wiesenthal's postwar record. Paul Grosz, chairman of the Vienna Jewish Culture Council, called the allegations made by WJC/OSI/Panorama "old hats that have just been brushed up again," and "doubtful opinions not shared by the majority." Alfred Streim, director of the German Center for Investigations of National Socialist Crimes, declared support for Wiesenthal.

In a Feb. 12 exclusive interview with the weekly *Der Spiegel*, Wiesenthal called attention to the fact that his postwar Nazi-hunting activities received official acclaim from such institutions as the U.S. War Crimes Commission, the Israeli ambassador to Vienna in the 1950s, and even the same Isser Harel of the Mossad who was now slandering him.

"I detected 39 Nazis that occupied leading positions in the G.D.R. [East German] press. Number 40 was the information minister. Furthermore, I detected 50 Nazis in the G.D.R. parliament and 100 Nazi professors. Who else has dealt with that? That woman Beate Klarsfeld, for example? Who else has done investigations except me?"

"Rosenbaum wrote a book in the U.S.A. that was a flop," Wiesenthal said later in the interview. "Now, he hopes that, after this TV program, he will find a publisher in Germany. This is what the editor of Panorama has told me." The responsible editor of the TV program, Joachim Wagner, may have told Wiesenthal that story, but the real motives for this slander likely lie elsewhere.

The allegations against Wiesenthal fit the black propaganda landscape of current international media cam-

paigns against Germany and Austria. The infamous "the united Germany is the Fourth Reich" line is especially promoted by publications of the Hollinger Corp. media empire, such as the London *Daily Telegraph*. The Hollinger group is known for its role as a preferred mouthpiece for psychological warriors of the British and "Commonwealth" intelligence services. Their media war against Germany and its Chancellor Helmut Kohl, a good friend of Wiesenthal, may be seen as an attack on a key political ally of President Clinton.

Germany's Norddeutsche Rundfunk (NDR), the Hamburg-based television station that produces Panorama, grew out of the NWDR, which Britain's military occupation forces created in northern Germany in 1945. NDR editors have repeatedly expressed gratitude for being trained in the "British style of journalism."

Wiesenthal told Germany's *Berliner Zeitung* that he is probing the ground for legal action against the WJC and OSI. The daily quoted him on Feb. 13, saying: "I have authorized my lawyer in Washington, D.C. to contact U.S. senators. In the contested segment of the ARD TV special Panorama, Mr. Rosenbaum appeared as a representative of the U.S. Department of Justice. We are now examining whether this occurred with the consent of the U.S. Department of Justice. An administrative official cannot, after all, stage such a performance, and this abroad, without the consent of a superior. We are trying to determine whether the TV appearance is in concordance with the duties of an official representative of the American administration."

Wiesenthal also announced he would visit Israel on April 14, to receive an honorary doctor's degree from Ben-Gurion University: "This is how Israel reacts to such allegations."