

The Guide of the Archive of P. Pitter and O. Fierz (APP)

For those interested from abroad, we present a basic overview of archival records that allow to study the life path and testimony of humanist P. Pitter and his co-workers.

Most archival records are in Czech. The closest Pitter's co-worker Olga Fierz came from Switzerland, what was the reason why the personal documentation associated with her childhood, study and family was written in the native languages German and French. Some documents are written in English because O. Fierz worked as a teacher in England for several years. In the 1920s, she arrived in Czechoslovakia, she studied Czech and even after leaving abroad in 1950 she spoke Czech with former co-workers.

Pitter's religious speeches are predominantly in Czech. He was able to write letters both in German and English - he corresponded with a large number of people internationally. Unfortunately, during historically serious period of the Protectorate and communism, correspondence with some institutions, especially with international peace activists (from India, England, USA, etc.) was destroyed by Pitter, so as not to endanger himself and his co-workers. In the post-exile period, the number of documents kept in other languages than Czech increased. The large part of documents concerns the issue of Czech-German relations and is available in German.

P. Pitter had close contact also with a number of Protestant churches, for example with Unitarians in Great Britain. He also led a lively dialogue with representatives of the Catholic Church in various European countries, particularly in Germany.

P. Pitter and O. Fierz left comprehensive correspondence, as they communicated with a wide circle of people. In case there was a frequent contact, the correspondence is archived according to the addressee's name; otherwise it is sorted alphabetically but according to years.

P. Pitter (1895-1976)

After P. Pitter returned from World War I, he became an organizer of the Christian and Social Pedagogical Movement, around the magazine Fraternisation (since 1924). His pedagogical interest resulted in the construction of the Milíč House in Žižkov (1933). In 1926, he met Olga Fierz, her later lifetime co-worker.

During World War II, Pitter wanted to protect Jewish children. After World War II, as a member of the Czech Social Security Commission, he managed a comprehensive rescue "Operation Castles" in which he saved children from concentration camps and later from Czechoslovakia internment camps. Suddenly Jewish and German children stayed next to each other under the P. Pitter's control.

In 1951, Pitter decided to emigrate, threatened by the persecution. The Valka refugee camp near Nuremberg became the place of his residence for ten years. He was appointed by the World Council of Churches for Pastoral and Social Service. Afterwards, he moved to the Swiss Affoltern am Albis, where he started issuing Talks with Writers and was involved intensely in the exile movement. He founded The Hus Congregation in Zurich, Czechoslovak complementary school, the Society for Science and Arts in Switzerland and he led the Masaryk Foundation.

For his untiring and significant work, he was awarded both the Israeli and German high honors and received the honorary doctorate from the Theology of the University of Zurich. In 1991, P. Pitter was awarded The Order of T. G. Masaryk in memoriam for outstanding merits for democracy and human rights.

The archive fund was created by the careful interest of its originators in preserving the documentation, even though historical circumstances forced some losses. However, some friends managed to bring to Switzerland part of the documents left in the Czechoslovakia. After the death of O. Fierz (1990), the Swiss MILIDU Association became the heir of the written estate. In September 1991, The MILIDU Association loaned the APP to the administration of the Pedagogical Museum of J. A. Comenius in Prague, so that the Czech public could get acquainted with the personality of P. Pitter and O. Fierz. The heart of the archive is a systematically sorted material in Switzerland, containing 242 cartons. The part of

archive contains material donated by friends living in the Czech Republic (currently 45 cartons).

APP is divided into seven basic topics:

1) Biographical Facts (14 cartons)

This section contains personal documentation of both P. Pitter and O. Fierz, family memoirs, as well as O. Fierz's documents from studies. As a valuable biographical component can be perceived diary records that P. Pitter wrote throughout his life. In addition to various awards, there is the Cultural and Social program which Pitter wrote during the World War II., where he largely reflected his principles concerning the concept of state organization.

2) Religious, social, organizational and pedagogical activity in movements and associations (49 cartons)

In this section, Pitter's public activities are summarized. From the pre-exile period, it is a preserved documentation about activities in the Milíč House and materials related to the post-war "Operation Castles", following the extensive correspondence with the children, who kept life-long relationship with P. Pitter afterwards. Administrative documentation, including proofs of preaching, captures Pitter's stay in the exile camp Valka. Also, there is a wide correspondence with emigrants, from Valka and later on.

Pitter's activity in international organizations is described by the collected material about The International Fellowship of Reconciliation and The War Resisters International. An important topic is presented by the documentation about Pitter's engagement in the Czech-German issue and his position in the Sudeten-German topic, which appears on the background of articles in the Sudeten-German associations and personal correspondence with their representatives. Pitter's presence in Switzerland uncovers a unique insight into the context of the life of Czechoslovakia emigration. The archive material describes the work of the Masaryk Foundation, the Hus Congregation, the Union of Czechoslovak refugees in Switzerland or the Society for Science and Arts. Pedagogical interest appears also in the Czechoslovak distant (Stuttgart) and complementary school (Zurich).

3) **Religious, educational, journalistic and literary work** (62 cartons)

The comprehensive publishing activity of P. Pitter is illustrated by the library of his published works and the complete series of edited periodicals *Fraternisation* (1924 - 1942) and *Talks with Writers* (1962 - 1990). Radio talks and sermons were also important activities on Radio Free Europe, BBC or Radio Roma mostly from the 1950s. Pitter wanted to publish his sermons in a comprehensive *Postil*; the content is documented in archive. In addition to the articles in various domestic journals, in foreign and exile journals can be seen the exile life in detail (e.g. *Hus's people*, *Czechoslovak*, *Czech Word*, *Czech Letters*, *Der Aufbau*, *Neue Wege*, *Glaube und Heimat*, *Fellowship*). Some preparatory materials to own articles or speeches Pitter thematically unified under the most frequent areas of his interest – e.g. the Jewish question, the Slovak question, the Czech Reformation. The important proof of pedagogical work is preparatory book for youth, not published and called *Adventure Hand and Vahú*.

In this part of the APP is also recorded the publishing activity of O. Fierz.

4) **Correspondence** (61 cartons)

The correspondence is divided into personal and institutional part. A valuable part is the mutual correspondence between P. Pitter and O. Fierz. In addition to the chronologically structured part of the letters, a substantial part of the personal correspondence is created by letters with the people who were frequently in touch with P. Pitter and O. Fierz, therefore with separate file. Among these frequent correspondents are also important representatives of cultural and scientific life (e.g. F. M. Bartoš, Cardinal J. Beran, K. Hujer, M. Kohák).

This archive is complemented by O. Fierz's family correspondence.

5) **Illustrative material about the Foundation's originators** (22 cartons)

An extensive set of photographic material chronologically illustrates the atmosphere of long-life effort of P. Pitter and O. Fierz. The APP also contains a large collection of tape recordings mainly of P. Pitter's sermons, various administrative tools and song-book with Christian songs, mainly used in the Milíč House or refugee camp Valka.

6) **Letters of foreign provenance** (30 cartons)

At this point, P. Pitter collected newspaper cuttings, chronologically or thematically (e.g. Israeli issues, alcoholism, youth care, religion, education, Czech reformation).

A special section is dedicated to the partial inheritance of a prominent Czech pedagogue and Pitter's inspirer and friend Ferdinand Krch. Here is also a typescript of unpublished key work *The Education of the Heart*, which summarizes Krch's lifelong pedagogical experience.

7) **Additional material** (4 cartons)

In addition to duplicate materials, O. Fierz's preparatory documentation for her unfinished *Memoirs* is stored in this last part of the APP.

For a closer acquaintance with the life and work of P. Pitter, it is possible to use the Czech publication of Pavel Kosatík, *Sám proti zlu* (Alone against evil, Prague 2009). There is a promotional brochure for free, about the life and work of P. Pitter, written in German and English. Further publications are available in German (Pavel Kohn: *Schlösser der Hoffnung, P. Pitter: Unter dem Rad der Geschichte*, Olga Fierz: *Kinderschicksale in den Wirren der Nachkriegszeit*) and in English (Pavel Kohn: *Castles of Hope*).

Thematic areas for seminar or diploma thesis

a) **Philosophy**

- P. Pitter - utopian or realist?

(the insight of Pitter's statement "Progress is caused by the implementation of utopias" on the basis of his extensive publishing activities)

- Philosophical sources of P. Pitter radical pacifism

(Pitter's connection to the thoughts of Chelčický and Tolstoy)

- Pitter's philosophy of Czech history

(Pitter's position in the dispute over the meaning of Czech history to mature work in the book The Spiritual Revolution in the heart of Europe)

b) **Theology**

- Pitter's concept of ecumenism

(the archival documentation of the Pitter's religious expression to individual congregations and churches, correspondence with Cardinal Beran)

- Exegetic activity of P. Pitter and his Postil

(the unpublished collection of biblical interpretations counts on 191 sermons)

- Christian P. Pitter in relation to Judaism

(in addition to numerous correspondence of P. Pitter with rescued Jewish children, the APP also contains extensive documentation about the reflection of the Jewish religion)

c) **Pedagogy**

- P. Pitter and pedagogical meaning of Milíč House

(some journals' records, the Milíč House Newsletter, unpublished books for children Adventure Hand and Vahú, correspondence with children)

- P. Pitter and his pedagogical work in exile

(Czechoslovak distant and complementary school, publication Parents' instructions for religious education)

- O. Fierz's drama education program

(About Children's Education of Drama, Documentation of Fairy tales dramatization in Milíč House)

d) **History**

- The Cultural and Social Program of P. Pitter

(the historical context of Pitter's documentary written during World War II)

- The work of P. Pitter in International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)

(the periodic and non-periodic brochures, the Czech branch of the Movement, Pitter's records from conferences and international events, reports about the Movement in Fraternisation magazine)

- Exile life through the eyes of P. Pitter

(the documentation of Pitter's activities in exile societies and organizations, correspondence, magazine Talks with Writers)

The Archive of P. Pitter and O. Fierz – Scheme of the archive organization

The archive is interconnected with the Foundation of P. Pitter and O. Fierz.

I. Biographical Facts

- a) personal documents
- b) documents from studies (schoolbooks, reading excerpts, study records)
- c) diaries
- d) economic and property matters of the Foundation's originators
- e) materials about the health status of the Foundation's originators

- f) documents of the family members of the Foundation's originators
- g) documents concerning the award of P. Pitter honorary doctorate
- h) documents concerning P. Pitter's death
- i) others

II. Religious, social, organizational and pedagogical activity in movements and societies

- a) Milíč House (1927 - 1951)
- b) "Operation Castles" (1945 - 1947, including correspondence)
- c) Refugee camp Valka (1952 - 1962, including correspondence)
- d) Service Civil International including correspondence
- e) International Fellowship of Reconciliation, including correspondence
- f) War Resisters International, including correspondence
- g) Czech-German question
- h) Sudeten-German problem
- i) Czechoslovak associations in Switzerland

III. Religious, educational, journalistic and literary work

- a) Preaching
- b) Speeches, lectures
- c) Radio Talks
- d) Articles (and preparatory material)
- e) Translations
- f) Books, brochures and correspondence for publishing
- g) Published magazines (complete series: Fraternisation, The Milíč House Newsletter, Talks with Writers)
- h) Talks with Writers (only material for numbers 89-145 and individual numbers in x copies)
- i) Papers, reviews of the Foundation's originator and his literary activities

IV. Correspondence

- a) Personal (correspondence of PP with OF, chronologically from 1951 to 1990, alphabetically according to the senders, copies of letters of the Foundation)

originators, greetings and congratulations, correspondence with various other institutions)

- b) Family correspondence of O. Fierz

V. Illustrative material about the Foundation's originators

- a) Photographs, pictures
- b) Postcards of visited places, maps
- c) Slides, tapes and videotapes
- d) Songbooks and musical materials
- e) Administrative tools and board games
- f) Cardboards
- g) Others

VI. Letters of foreign provenance

- a) Newspaper cuts sorted alphabetically, lists of exile publishers, materials for the Czech Reformation, comprehensive collections of colleagues and friends of the Milíč House

VII. Additional material

- a) Duplication and multiplicity, documents to the memories of O. Fierz, collected by her at the end of life