Hi --

In our continuing "coverage of the coverage" of the Commission's Gold Train progress report, US News & World Rept. gives reason to believe not quite everything you read is precisely accurate.

Other assets-related news:

Cry for Argentina (1)
Pius Pile-On (3)
Austr;ans Online (1)
Assets-- Coming Soon to a Town Near You... (2)

Stu

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Sadly, some GIs did it, too
Looting Holocaust victims’ lost wealth

BY MICHAEL SATCHELL

http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/991025/loot.htm

The sorry, murky history of Nazi loot turning up in art galleries, museums, and private collections throughout Europe and North America continues to evoke the horrors of the Holocaust. More than 120 valuable paintings and other art objects believed plundered from Jewish victims are currently under investigation in New York, Seattle, London, Madrid, Florence, and Vienna, their origin to be authenticated. Last week, details of another case of World War II pillage were documented by the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets. And this time there is no mystery about where the items came from nor about who stole them: American soldiers.

Gold train. At war's end, GIs intercepted a railroad train in Austria packed with gold, silver, art, jewelry, furs, Oriental rugs, furniture, clocks, and other valuables worth more than $200 million in 1945 prices. This wealth had been seized from Hungary’s Jews and dispatched west from Budapest by the notorious Adolf Eichmann, who had supervised the murder of most of the nation’s 750,000 Jewish citizens. The Americans rejected ownership claims by the Hungarian government and by survivors eager to reclaim their property, even denying access to a warehouse where the spoils...
were stored. After the booty was declared "unidentifiable," senior Army officers, including five generals, began helping themselves, furnishing their captured villas with the choicest pieces. Other items— including two suitcases of gold dust— were pilfered or sold openly by the Army to soldiers. What valuables remained were shipped to New York and auctioned for United Nations refugee relief.

Was it a crime? It was war, and the black market was thriving. And the origin of the items in question was officially in dispute: The valuables weren’t stolen but were "requisitioned," were "souvenirs," not loot. Trouble is, the shipment also contained irrefutable evidence of true ownership—crates of wedding bands, ripped from the fingers of dead Holocaust victims.

http://www.ft.com/hippocampus/q192a36.htm

Wednesday October 20 1999

World News / Americas

ARGENTINA: Jewish groups seek more time to probe Nazism

Perón created a welcoming environment, but the limited influence uncovered so far has provoked debate, reports Ken Warn

Leading international Jewish organisations have urged Argentina to extend the life of a controversial commission investigating Nazi activity in the country before, during and after the second world war.

Representatives of the New York-based World Jewish Congress and the Washington-based B'nai B'rith International are believed to have asked Argentina's outgoing government, and the two leading presidential candidates ahead of Sunday's elections, to keep the commission going for at least another year.

The Commission to Investigate the Role of Nazism in Argentina (CEANA) was set up by the government with a two-year remit to estimate the numbers of war criminals who settled in Argentina, and determine if any Nazi loot entered the country. Its role was extended to examine the impact of Nazism on Argentine culture and society.

Nominally neutral Argentina had fluid contacts with the Axis powers until the dying days of the war. The country is today home to Latin America's biggest Jewish community. It has seen two deadly and unsolved bombings of Jewish sites this decade, along with continuing outbreaks of anti-Semitism, such as two recent acts of desecration of Jewish tombs.

The commission comprises an international team of scholars working under an advisory panel. It has uncovered the first documentary evidence that Nazi and fascist gold entered Argentina, and compiled a list of 180 known war criminals who came to the country.

However, the relatively small amount of gold and low number of confirmed
war criminals involved has led to at times heated debate with other researchers and Jewish organisations.

Ignacio Klich, co-ordinator of the commission's academic committee, denied that the body was designed to "whitewash" the reputation of Argentina's post-war leader Gen Juan Domingo Perón, founder of the current ruling party, by playing down his links with Nazism.

"As historians, we have to go by the documentary evidence. The 180 war criminals whose names we have established are only the minimum number who came here," said Mr Klich. "Some of the eastern European archives which are opening up could yield more names."

Uncomfortably for the Peronist party, the research makes it clear Gen Perón created a welcoming environment for Nazi scientists and technicians, and had links with financiers connected with the Nazi regime.

The commission uncovered two cases where gold belonging to the Nazis and sympathisers entered Argentina. The Swiss legation in Buenos Aires transferred a number of gold coins to the Argentine authorities as part of the liquidation of Nazi assets after the war.

In another incident in December 1946, an advance party of fleeing Croatians transferred gold worth about $2.5m at present prices to Argentina. The gold, seized from the Croatian state bank, included coins, ingots and jewellery, and could originally have been plundered from the Ustasha regime's Jewish, Serb and other victims, researchers believe. There are documentary hints that much larger transfers were made.

The commission's findings contrast with media claims that anything between 2,000 and 60,000 war criminals found a haven in Argentina, and that the country was a key destination for Nazi loot.

The Nazi-hunting Simon Wiesenthal Centre has said there were extensive transfers of Nazi gold to Argentina via Portugal. It also says there is evidence that Gen Perón sent up to 25 tons of gold ingots with Nazi markings to neighbouring Paraguay in the early 1950s.

The commission found no evidence of this, nor of the German submarines long rumoured to have unloaded large quantities of looted artworks - and fleeing Nazis - on Argentine shores. However, there is tantalising evidence that Argentina was used as a "triangulation point" to release looted artworks into the US and European markets.

One of the biggest obstacles to the investigators has been Argentina's lack of an archival tradition. Local documentation has often been meagre or non-existent. The Catholic Church refused to open its archives to investigators keen to examine the Church's alleged role in helping Nazis and sympathisers flee Europe.

If the commission is extended, it would continue trying to open Argentine and foreign archives, said Mr Klich. Work on papers in former Yugoslavia, halted by the Kosovo war, could also be resumed.
Vatican expert: Suspend Pius beatification process during Holocaust probe

By HAIM SHAPIRO

JERUSALEM (October 20) - Vatican expert Dr. Itzhak Minerbi, of the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Judaism, yesterday welcomed the idea of setting up a joint Jewish-Catholic commission of scholars to investigate the activities of the Vatican relating to the Holocaust. But he warned that if the scholarly investigation is to have any meaning, the beatification process for Pius XII will have to be suspended while the commission works.

Minerbi also expressed his fears that the scholars will be limited to delving into the 11 volumes of Vatican sources compiled by four Jesuit priests in the 1980s, searching for omissions. Minerbi spoke after examining the communique issued by the Vatican yesterday officially announcing the establishment of the joint commission.

According to the communique, the scholars will "review published volumes of church archival material covering the World War II period."

It also said that Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, and Seymour Reich, chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), who together announced the agreement to set up the joint commission, "expressed the hope that any question and differences that now exist or may arise can be resolved through the joint review approach."

The communique said the scholars are expected to raise relevant questions and issues that had not been resolved by the 11 volumes and to issue a report.

"Usually scholars look into archives for documents kept in those archives. Now they will be looking into published books to find out what has been omitted," Minerbi said.

He added that even if the scholars identify a document as having been omitted, it is not clear what will happen. Will the document be produced for the scholars, and if it is, will the Vatican allow it to be published.

He added that the idea of having Jewish and Catholic scholars working together is a good one.

So far, Minerbi said, the Vatican official history appears to be working to preserve the memory of Pius XII. This attempt to justify the silence of Pius XII, he said, is unfair to the church people who, with great danger and sometime at the cost of their lives, raised their voices against persecution.

Gerhard Riegner, the World Jewish Congress representative in Geneva during World War II who is now honorary vice president of the WJC, said in Rome yesterday that the establishment of the team is a positive step aimed at establishing the truth. In his recently published memoirs, Riegner pointed out that a secret cable warning of German plans to kill millions of Jews
with poison gas, which he sent to the pope shortly after the infamous Wannsee Conference, was omitted from the 11 volumes.

"The aim of the research is to ascertain whether documentation published by the Vatican is complete and eventually to find what has been omitted and must be added in order to establish the objective truth about the position of the Vatican towards the Jewish community in World War II. If it is not complete, they may ask for the opening of the archives for further clarification," Riegner said.

Meanwhile, Father Pierre Blet, the last surviving member of the team which compiled the 11 volumes, had pointed out on earlier occasion that that group had not been primarily interested in the activities of the Vatican in relation to the Jews.

"Our purpose was to show how Pius XII worked for peace during World War II, not specifically to show how he saved Jewish lives," Blet said.

(Lisa Palmieri-Billig contributed to this report.)

http://www.jta.org/oct99/19-vati.htm

Accord to review Vatican material seen by Jews as a 'useful first step'

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Oct. 19 (JTA) -- The Vatican and an international committee of Jewish leaders have agreed to set up a team of Jewish and Catholic scholars to review published Vatican archival material relating to World War II.

The move, announced Tuesday, stops short of complying with long-standing Jewish demands that the Vatican open its wartime archives to outside researchers in order, among other things, to clarify the actions of the wartime pope, Pius XII.

Controversy over the wartime role of the church, and particularly of Pius XII, has been highlighted recently, in part because of possible plans by the Vatican to beatify Pius.

In addition, a new book about Pius by British historian John Cornwell, "Hitler's Pope," uses documentary evidence to show that Pius was an anti-Semite who facilitated Hitler's rise to power.

Seymour Reich, chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, known as IJICIC, welcomed the agreement as "a useful first step in resolving the matter of the Vatican's role during World War II."

He and others said the move is significant because the committee will have the imprimatur of the Vatican and could ultimately lead to access to secret wartime archives.

It would also, he said, aid in "resuming the Catholic-Jewish dialogue that has helped advance the evolving relationship between our two faiths in recent decades."
The agreement was announced after a more than three-hour meeting at the Vatican on Monday between Reich and Cardinal Edward Cassidy, president of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews. Other IJCIC and Vatican representatives also took part.

The accord stems from a suggestion made by Cassidy at a meeting between his commission and IJCIC representatives in Rome in March 1998.

A statement issued Tuesday said a team of three Jewish and three Catholic scholars will be named soon.

Their duty will be to examine 11 volumes of Vatican archival material published between 1965 and 1981 that relate to the church's role during World War II.

But they also will be empowered to seek clarification from other sources on questions left open by these documents.

"The team of scholars is expected to raise relevant questions and issues that, in its opinion, have not been adequately or satisfactorily resolved by the available documentation, and to issue and report on their findings," the Vatican and IJCIC said in the statement.

It quoted Cassidy and Reich as hoping that "any question and differences that now exist or may arise can be resolved through the joint review approach."

Reich, elected chairman of IJCIC last month, told JTA that material from the closed Vatican archives may be necessary to resolve issues.

"What is important," he said, "is that the team will have the imprimatur of the Vatican. It will be difficult to ignore findings or questions posed by them."

He said IJCIC still ultimately wants the Vatican archives to be opened, but would not press on this matter while the review process is going on.

"At the moment we agree that this approach is best," he said. "It's a useful first step toward arriving at what we want."

On the question of the beatification of Pius XII, Reich said that although nothing was stated explicitly, he got the sense that "there was no rush" on the Vatican's part to beatify Pius.

For his part, Cassidy expressed "satisfaction" at the agreement and said he was "convinced that what is needed in this connection is a joint study by competent Jewish and Catholic scholars of the available documents from the troubled period of the Second World War."

IJCIC is the main institutional Jewish partner in formal dialogue with the Vatican.

Its membership includes the American Jewish Committee, B’nai B’rith International, the Israel Jewish Council on Interreligious Consultations, the World Jewish Congress and representative bodies of Orthodox, Conservative and Reform Jewry.

For a variety of reasons, the body has all but ceased activities in recent
years.

Reich said the meeting with Cassidy -- believed to be the first substantive meeting by IJCIC leaders and Cassidy since the March 1998 session -- got formal interfaith dialogue "back on track."

Last February Cassidy shook up the interfaith community by declaring that IJCIC essentially was "no longer in existence."

In speeches, he complained that "aggressive" anti-church attitudes by some Jewish organizations threatened Jewish-Catholic relations and said an "uncertain atmosphere" was "beginning to cloud over our present relationship."

Reich said the concerns Cassidy expressed were a "wake-up call" that pushed IJCIC member groups to revive the body's operations.

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Tuesday October 19, 3:44 pm Eastern Time

Company Press Release

SOURCE: American Jewish Congress

AJCongress Says Vatican Commission On The Holocaust Responds To Jewish Concerns, But Question Remains What Materials Will Be Made Available To Scholars

NEW YORK, Oct. 19 /PRNewswire/ -- The American Jewish Congress declared today that the announcement by the Vatican that a commission of Jewish and Catholic scholars will examine the Church's archives to explore the actions of the institutional Church and Pope Pius II during the Holocaust poses a dilemma for the Jewish community: the action is a welcome response to previous Jewish criticism of Pope John Paul II's Holocaust statement in 1998, but unfortunately it is not clear that the information that will be made accessible will be adequate for serious scholarly and historical purposes.

While "reluctant once again to express reservations" over action taken by the Vatican, AJCongress Executive Director Phil Baum said in a statement, "The question remains just what the commission will be permitted to examine...Unfettered access is required to any and all documents required by the scholars who will serve on the commission, with the right to publish these documents." This is particularly important, he noted, given the Church's efforts to beatify Pius II.

"Pope John Paul II has made it clear that he is a friend of the Jewish people," Baum said. "He has proceeded slowly and cautiously in confronting the actions of the Church and its leader during those terrible times. We know Pope John Paul II to be a man of conscience and we are confident he will appreciate the importance to the world of a full account of the moral failures of that tragic era."

The full text of the statement is as follows:

Today's announcement by the Vatican that a joint commission of Jewish and
Catholic scholars will examine the Church's archives to explore Vatican actions during the Holocaust again poses a dilemma for the Jewish community.

Clearly, we appreciate and understand today's action to be a genuine effort by Church officials to respond to widespread Jewish criticism of John Paul II's statement in March, 1998. The statement acknowledged that some Catholics failed morally during the Holocaust, but Jewish critics noted that it studiously avoided reference to the behavior of the Church as an institution and its responsibility for and complicity in the extermination of the Jews.

At that time Church officials let it be known they were distressed by what they took to be a rigid and ungenerous response to John Paul II's statement.

We are therefore reluctant once again to express reservations about an action taken by the Vatican, an action which was surely intended to accommodate earlier Jewish criticism.

Unfortunately the question remains just what the commission will be permitted to examine. If it is only the 11-volume compendium of archival material already published by the Vatican, that is not sufficient for serious scholarly and historical research. Rather, unfettered access is required to any and all documents required by the scholars who will serve on the commission, with the right to publish these documents.

It is particularly important that all relevant materials be made available, given current efforts supported by the Pope to beatify Pope Pius XII, Eugenio Pacelli. It would incomprehensible for the Church to render sainthood on a man who overlooked or was indifferent to the slaughter of millions, as Pius has been accused of doing.

Pope John Paul II has made it clear that he is a friend of the Jewish people. He has proceeded slowly and cautiously in confronting the actions of the Church and its leader during those terrible times. We know Pope John Paul II to be a man of conscience and we are confident he will appreciate the importance to the world of a full account of the moral failures of that tragic era.

SOURCE: American Jewish Congress

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October 19, 1999, Tuesday

SECTION: NEWS; Pg. 5

LENGTH: 365 words

HEADLINE: Heirs' Internet site lists 50,000 pre-Holocaust Austrian Jews

BYLINE: Gil Hoffman
The Simon Wiesenthal Center published a database on the Internet yesterday, containing the names of more than 50,000 Jews who lived in Austria prior to the Holocaust and may have had assets confiscated by the Nazis.

Wiesenthal Center Associate Dean Abraham Cooper said that the next step is to add to the site the names of more than 100,000 Jews who lived in Germany prior to the war, which Cooper said will be completed within three months.

The site, located at www.livingheirs.com, contains step-by-step instructions on how to determine if you are a relative and heir to a Holocaust victim who lost assets in the war, identify specific assets owned by a relative, and document claims to their confiscated assets.

The Wiesenthal Center obtained the names from Gestapo documents at the Austrian State Archives in Vienna.

When the Germans occupied Vienna in 1938, they required all Jewish residents to complete a detailed declaration of valuables, including bank accounts, insurance policies, real estate, and art. Volunteers compiled the names on the documents for the Web site.

"The Web site empowers people who have been orphaned out of the process of finding out whether or not their family members actually held a bank account, had an insurance policy, or owned land. Now we have answers for 50,000 families," Cooper said.

"Even a document forced upon them by the Gestapo at least gives them a memory of their relatives that they never had," Cooper said.

Efrat resident Tommy Lamm said he found the name of his grandfather, Emmanuel Lamm, who was sent to Auschwitz, on the site.

Lamm said it was exciting to find his grandfather's name, because he had never met or had any contact with him.

"We didn't even have a photo of him, so it gave me a feeling of 'wow!'," Lamm said. "We will check out whether he had any assets, but honestly I was more excited to see his name on a document from the past. The emotional
connection
and excitement is worth more for me than any material benefit that may or may
not eventuate.

"This is going to happen to a lot of people - opening up a dark period of
history for people about their families," Lamm said.


Holocaust suit covers Coloradans

By Virginia Culver
Denver Post Religion Writer

Oct. 20 - More than 200 Coloradans may benefit from a class-action lawsuit
seeking damages for the persecution they suffered during the Holocaust.

Most of the 230 people who have filed to collect money were Jews who lost
property confiscated by the Nazis with the aid of Swiss officials during World War II, according to the Holocaust Awareness Institute of Denver. Others had money in Swiss bank accounts that was never released to the families.

The Coloradans, immigrants from seven different countries, are part of possibly hundreds of thousands of people worldwide who will be reimbursed for monetary or property losses because of the Swiss government's interaction with the Nazi regime.

The class-action lawsuit, filed in 1997, first applied only to Jews and mostly to those whose families had money in Swiss accounts that the survivors and their heirs never knew about.

But since the original filing, other classes who might benefit from the suit have been added because they, like Jews, were specific targets of the Nazi regime. They include Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, the Roma (often called Gypsies), physically and mentally disabled people, and those who were forced into slave labor.

People who believe they are due compensation because they or their relatives were Nazi victims have until Friday to file applications. They can be obtained from the Holocaust Awareness Institute and the Jewish Family Service, both in Denver. Both agencies have worked for months to find people who might be eligible. Jewish Family Service is helping people fill out forms, especially Russian immigrants unfamiliar with English.

A federal judge in New York City is scheduled Nov. 29 to decide if the settlement that has been negotiated with the Swiss banks and other entities will be approved. The settlement, which amounts to $1.25 billion, would then be distributed, possibly by February.

Stephanie Auger, director of the Holocaust Institute at the University of Denver, said there is no reason to believe the New York court won't approve
the settlement.

She said some people haven't joined the class-action suit but instead have filed their own lawsuits against the Swiss.

When the suit was first filed in 1997, there were an estimated 100,000 Jews worldwide who were thought to have had Swiss bank accounts before World War II. The suit was intended to get the money back to the survivors or their heirs.

The suit also includes those claimants who were denied entrance to Switzerland when they were fleeing Nazi persecution and those jailed or abused by Swiss authorities.

Auger said most of the Coloradans making application for compensation have no documents because everything was confiscated from them during the Holocaust. But they are asked in the six-page questionnaire to provide as many documents, dates, times, names and places as possible.

Jewish Family Service can be reached at 303-759-4890 and the Holocaust Institute at 303-871-3020.

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http://www.msnbc.com/local/WCAU/200123.asp#BODY

Holocaust survivors get Swiss returns

Elaine Gross says she's still angry with the Nazis for destroying her family and keeping her in a concentration camp.

PHILADELPHIA, PA - Some Philadelphians who remember the holocaust all too well are trying to get some of the money that they, or their family, may have lost when the Nazis took over their homes. After decades of worldwide pressure, Swiss Banks have agreed to make a $1.2 billion financial settlement.

"I lost nine persons in my family," said Elaine Gross, with a think Hungarian accent. "Who pay for this? I don't care about the money. Give me back one sister, one brother. That's enough. "

Gross works as a volunteer in the Neuman Center kitchen. For two years, she worked as a seamstress at Auschwitz.

She went in with her family of nine, only she survived.

At 22, she was alone.

Monday, the 80-year-old filled out forms to claim what belongs to her, but she said it hurts.

"It's no money to pay," Gross said. "It doesn't matter. Give a million and a million. It's not paid what you lost, it's not paid."

Once out of Auschwitz, despite the loss of her mother, father, brothers and sisters she only wanted to return to her home in Hungary hoping to find something - a memory or a momento.

"Everything broken window, door, ceiling...everything," Gross recalled. "Nothing...nothing. Not even a picture. Absolutely nothing."

Filling out a form, it seemed simple.

But it wasn't.

"These kinds of times remind them very much of everything they've gone through in the past...the suffering, the torture, the losses they've
experienced," said Rivka Powers, of the Neuman Center. "Where were you? What were you doing from 1934 to 1945? Listing one after the other the concentration camps certainly is difficult for them," Powers said.

For Elaine, the numbers she was stamped on her skin in Auschwitz may have faded somewhat over the years, but not in her mind. "I’m not angry at anybody," Gross said.

When News 10’s Edie Huggins asked Elaine who she was angry with, she said, "just the Nazis."

There are people from the United States Department of Treasury to help holocaust survivors of fill out their claims. It was to have been a one-day affair, but because they think some didn’t get the information on time, the Neuman Center, located in the 600 block of Bustleton Avenue, will be open again on Tuesday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

If you’d like more information, call 215-338-9800. The questionnaires must be sent to San Francisco by Friday, October 22nd.

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues**
Amis stahlen wie die Raben

Geheimbericht der amerikanischen Kunstbeauftragten nach dem Krieg — Teppiche, Rembrandts und Dürers


Darunter wohl auch jene 26 orientalische Teppiche aus Ungarn, die ein Oberstleutnant gleich mit in die USA nahm. Im Brief heißt es: „A Lt. Col. returned to the States recently from Salzburg taking with him 26 oriental Hungarian rugs — McKee (my chief) refused to let me write the Provost Marshall of his Army Post to investigate.‘‘ Ihr Chef verbot ihr also, den Fall zu melden. Ebenso ohne Konsequenzen blieb es, dass Eve Tucker gestohlene Kunstgegenstände aus Frankreich und Holland in einer Salzburger Gasträtsch und im Offizierskino entdeckte.

Hi --

Gold Train coverage keep coming in (2 articles) -- again making us wonder what their Maine source of facts is. In other assets news:

Sunshine State Supports Survivors Staying Home (1)
Pardon? Do you have a grey Papon? (3)
Poke Pius (Part X) (1)

Stu

BANGOR DAILY NEWS (BANGOR, MAINE)

October 20, 1999 Wednesday

HEADLINE: Spoils of war

BODY:

The Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States has concluded that American military forces in Europe at the end of World War II "generally behaved in a commendable way" in returning Nazi loot to the Jews from whom it was confiscated -- "with one notable exception."

One notable and appalling exception: On May 16, 1945, nine days after the German surrender, a train laden with gold, art, antiques and other valuables stolen from the Hungarian victims of that criminal regime was diverted from its rightful owners to Austria, where rugs, paintings, silverware, china, linens and other valuables were divvied up among at least five American generals to furnish their homes, offices, villas and private railroad cars. At least 1,100 paintings and a suitcase full of gold dust that were turned over to Austraian officials were never seen again.

The commission, formed a year ago to track the fate of Holocaust victims' assets that may have come under American control, worked quickly and thoroughly in this investigation, a sharp contrast to the half-century of foot-dragging seen elsewhere.

The explanation the commission offered for this particular wrong -- the postwar politics of Central Europe made it imperative that these treasures not fall into the hands of the Soviet forces controlling Hungary -- is sadly similar to the explanations offered elsewhere. Whether it's billions in gold -- in both bullion and dental-filling form -- residing in Swiss banks, paintings that
inexplicably turned up in art museums, life-insurance policies not honored or slave labor not paid for by companies that still prosper, expediency remains the excuse for the inexcusable.

This issue of returning to rightful owners property stolen by the largest and most brutal criminal enterprise in modern history will not go away, nor should it. The passage of time, the difficulty of piecing together scattered records, the fading recollections are not justification. They are complicity.

The persistence of Holocaust victims and their survivors in this matter is a story as remarkable as the crime is heinous. For more than four decades, governments, museums and banks hoped it all would go away, assumed it all would be forgotten.

The publication in 1989 of historian Arthur Smith's "Nazi Gold" jarred the world's memory. Fiftieth anniversary observations of various World War II events and the collapse of the Soviet Union brought forth more recollections and documents. In 1995, billionaire Edgar Bronfman, chairman of the Seagram Co. and head of the World Jewish Congress made the unclaimed Jewish deposits in Swiss banks a headline issue. Two years later, former Sen. Alfonse D'Amato of New York took up the cause by releasing declassified U.S. military intelligence documents tracing gold stolen by the Nazis from Belgian Jews to Swiss banks. Just last year, the United States and 38 other nations launched a drive to locate stolen art.

The doggedness of Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat has kept these exhumed crimes from being reburied.

And now the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets has brought this issue to the home front. The Pentagon has so far been reluctant to provide any substantive information on the five generals cited in the report or on the whereabouts of the stolen property. That is an unfortunate and unacceptable position.

The more time passes, the more rotten these spoils of war become.

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Hungarian Jews seek WWII loot from US

By Daniel Langenkamp, Reuters, 10/21/99

BUDAPEST - Hungarian Jewish leaders met US officials yesterday in Budapest to request the return of assets from a 'gold train' that was appropriated by US forces after World War II.

They conceded the difficulty in finding owners of the treasures aboard the Nazi train, loaded with gold, diamonds, paintings, furs, and even wedding bands taken from Hungary's Jews during the war.

"We are very happy that this agonizing problem came up," said Peter Tordai, president of Hungary's Federation of Jewish Communities. "Our standpoint is that we at least must save the valuable assets of the 600,000 martyrs that were killed. ... It is our moral obligation."
The request followed a report published last week by the US Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets, which found that Americans profited from the treasures of Hungarian Jews after the war.

The report outlined a picture of greed among members of the US military, who helped themselves to the assets on a 24-car train seized in Werfen, Austria, in May 1945, during the last weeks of the war.

The train, the existence of which was never publicly documented, was laden with an array of treasures worth more than $200 million in 1945. The goods had been confiscated by Nazi forces from 800,000 Hungarian Jews.

Tordai said that Hungarian Jewish organizations are asking for the return of the objects still traceable to their rightful owners and want the Jewish community to receive the value in currency of objects still unaccounted for.

"We really have a need for certain material improvements for creating the renaissance of Jewry" in Hungary, he said.

Hungarian Jewish representatives also asked to take part in the process of finding the rightful owners of the assets, deemed "unidentifiable" by the United States after the war.

"They said there would probably be no problem with our request to assist in the process of discovery," said Gabor Sebes, director of the Jewish Public Foundation in Budapest.

The leaders also asked that no agreements regarding the assets be formed with either the Hungarian government or international Jewish organizations without their participation.

Fewer than 20,000 survivors of 600,000 Hungarian Jews killed in the Holocaust live in the country today, and a comprehensive list of the many original documents about the treasures confiscated by the Nazi puppet government in Hungary during the war has never been put together, he said.

But many survivors and descendants, some with documents of the belongings they lost, had contacted his organization, he said.

He added that Hungarian Jews were not planning to turn to the courts to get back the assets, which they have been inquiring after for 25 years.

"This is not about the money or about who can get what back," he said. "I believe it's the moral example that is important."

This story ran on page A26 of the Boston Globe on 10/21/99.

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http://biz.yahoo.com/rf/991021/bb.html

Thursday October 21, 12:37 am Eastern Time

Florida backs health care for Holocaust survivors

WASHINGTON, Oct 20 (Reuters) - Florida on Thursday unveiled a proposal to provide free home health care to some 10,000 Holocaust survivors living in the state, a plan that could become a model for global efforts to aid survivors.
Bill Nelson, Florida's treasurer and insurance commissioner, was due to detail the plan to the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, meeting in Washington.

In a statement released by his office, Nelson said he would urge the commission to approve up to $10 million in start-up money for the plan, using funds already deposited into an account by companies suspected of not honoring survivors' insurance policies.

The plan would require insurers to pay millions more during the years during which the aging population of Holocaust survivors needed care.

"Many of these Holocaust victims are elderly and frail," Nelson said. "This would give them some compensation now while we continue our work to get insurance companies to honor any unpaid claims."

Giving immediate relief to survivors in the form of free home health care would allow them to live out their days in dignity, Nelson said.

SUGGESTION WAS MADE IN JULY

The Florida state official first suggested such a plan at a meeting of the commission in July. If the panel approves Nelson's plan for Florida, it could become a pilot for a program worldwide, the state said.

The plan calls for a nurse or health-care assistant to come to the survivor's home to provide medical services prescribed by a doctor. This service would be available to Holocaust survivors for the rest of their lives.

Being such a survivor would be the sole criterion of eligibility.

The commission was created last year to settle outstanding life and property insurance claims by survivors or their heirs. But its work has been plagued by problems.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said on Monday that Jewish groups might call for a boycott against German insurer Allianz AG if the company continued to refuse to release a list of Holocaust-era policies on which it had not paid benefits.

Steinberg said the international commission had delayed the launch of the claims-resolution process partly because the list from Allianz was not available. The company says it would be too time-consuming to prepare such a list because it has records of 1.3 million policies from that era.

Allianz is one of five insurance companies serving on the commission, which also includes representatives of U.S. state insurance regulators and Jewish groups, such as the World Jewish Congress. Allianz is the only insurer refusing to divulge unpaid claims.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/19991021/aponline082528_000.htm

French Court Hearing Papon's Appeal

By Marilyn August
Associated Press Writer
PARIS -- Rejecting prosecutors' arguments, France's highest court ruled today that lawyers for Maurice Papon - the former Vichy official convicted for his role in sending Jews to Nazi death camps - can present an appeal even though their client has fled the country.

Papon, 89, was convicted in April 1998 for complicity in crimes against humanity for his role in the deportation of 1,590 Jews from the city of Bordeaux. Most of the deportees later died at Auschwitz.

Papon was freed during his trial and appeals process, and he has disappeared.

He seemed to have lost his right to challenge his 10-year sentence by not reporting to authorities before the start of today's appeal hearing, as the law requires. But today, the high court overruled a plea from chief prosecutor Bruno Cotte and told Papon's lawyers they could present their case.

Lawyers representing the families of Papon's victims were angered by the court's decision, which they claim contravenes French law.

"The very fact there is even a hearing today shows Maurice Papon continues to get special treatment. This case has been full of exceptions from beginning to end," said lawyer Alain Jakubowicz.

In their appeal, Papon's lawyers argued that he was not able to properly defend himself during his trial because many of his witnesses were dead. They also claimed Papon had been questioned on convoys of deported Jews that were not included in the charges against him and that testimony had been included that violated judicial procedure.

Meanwhile, Swiss Foreign Ministry spokesman Ruedi Christen confirmed today that Papon was in the western Swiss town of Martigny last week. Christen said he didn't know where the former French budget minister is now.

Papon's trial opened old wounds about French collaboration with the Nazis, and his flight raised questions about the nation's determination to confront its role in the Holocaust.

"This is not a trial of vengeance but of memory, which must set not only a legal precedent in the court but also in classrooms, school curriculums and in history textbooks," said Charles Choucroy, another lawyer for survivors of the victims.

Papon spent three days in jail at the start of his trial in October 1997, but the court then released him for the duration of the trial and the appeals period. That decision is now hotly contested.

His flight has become an embarrassment for French officials, who did not place judicial controls on Papon or revoke his passport after his conviction.

Arrogant and defiant, Papon went on to a brilliant postwar career and never showed remorse for his wartime behavior. The former high-ranking police official in the pro-Nazi Vichy regime explained his flight in a statement Wednesday, saying he had chosen exile to uphold his honor.

Prime Minister Lionel Jospin has condemned Papon's flight and said France
would ask for Papon's extradition if he is in a foreign country. Justice
Minister Elisabeth Guigou said an arrest warrant would be issued
immediately if the court upholds the conviction.


Wednesday October 20 2:14 PM ET

Papon Says He Has Gone Into Exile

By MARILYN AUGUST Associated Press Writer

PARIS (AP) - Defying French justice and angering Holocaust victims, former
Vichy official Maurice Papon has fled the country to avoid being jailed for
his complicity in deporting 1,590 Jews to Nazi death camps during World War
II.

Authorities ordered an international arrest warrant to track down Papon,
whose six-month trial opened old wounds about French collaboration with the
Nazis and whose flight was certain to raise questions about the nation's
determination to confront its role in the Holocaust.

The 89-year-old Papon, the highest-ranking member of the pro-Nazi Vichy
regime to be convicted for complicity in crimes against humanity,
maintained in a statement Wednesday that he had chosen exile to uphold his
honor.

The former deputy prefect of Bordeaux disappeared on the eve of his appeals
hearing, which was scheduled for Thursday. Under French law, he was
required to report to jail on the eve of the hearing and his failure to
appear would mean automatic rejection of his appeal.

He spent three days in jail at the start of his trial in October 1997, but
a Bordeaux court then released him for health reasons during the trial and
appeals period.

Papon, who was sentenced to 10 years in jail, did not say where he was
going. His lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, told The Associated Press that his
client might be in the British Channel Islands of Jersey or Guernsey. The
lack of border controls among EU countries - and France's failure to revoke
his passport - would have made it easy for Papon to leave the country.

His disappearance was a major embarrassment to French officials who did not
place controls on Papon's movements after his April 1998 conviction for his
role in deporting 1,590 Jews from Bordeaux to Drancy, the squalid French
transit camp that was the antechamber to Auschwitz.

Papon was absolved of guilt in their deaths at Auschwitz after the jury
appeared to accept his defense that while he knew the deportees would meet
a cruel fate, he was unaware of the Nazis' systematic extermination of
Jews.

"If Maurice Papon had been an ordinary thief or rapist, authorities would
have taken away his passport, at the very least," said civil party lawyer
Arno Klarsfeld, adding that he may press charges against Bordeaux
magistrates who allowed Papon to remain free throughout his trial.
Prime Minister Lionel Jospin called Papon's decision to flee "a final sign of indifference, contempt and provocation with regard to all victims of the Holocaust," and said France would ask for extradition if he was found in a foreign country.

For French Holocaust victims, who withstood 18 years of legal delays to bring Papon to justice, Papon's flight was a painful reminder that the former Vichy official may still enjoy protection at the highest levels.

"During the war, French authorities showed absolutely no sign of laxity or incompetence when it came to arresting Jewish children, but now, it seems, they've let him get away," said Therese Stopnicki, 68, whose two sisters, Rachel and Nelly, were among the children Papon ordered plucked from a safe home outside Bordeaux and had deported.

"It sickens me," Mrs. Stopnicki said by telephone from her home in Mulhouse. "We cannot heal our wounds; we cannot complete the grieving until he is behind bars."

Papon has denied all charges against him, arguing he saved Jews and worked with the French Resistance. No proof of those claims emerged in the trial, which included testimony from survivors, former members of the Resistance and leading World War II historians.

"Having to report to authorities crowns a series of illegal acts that marked the investigation and trial against me," Papon said in his statement. "To this ultimate challenge, there is only one response in accordance with honor: exile, as painful as it might be for a man in his 90th year."

Arrogant and defiant, Papon never showed remorse.

"The masks have fallen once and for all," said civil party lawyer Alain Levy. "He was certainly better at saving his own skin than saving elderly Jews from Bordeaux."

The marathon trial marked a new look at one of the most sordid chapters in French history when the Vichy regime willingly collaborated with the Nazis in the persecution and deportation of Jews.

Papon was a senior police official in the Gironde region in southwestern France from 1942-1944. He served in successive French governments after the war, at one point becoming budget minister.

Convicted Nazi collaborator Papon flees France
By MICHEL ZLOTOWSKI and news agencies

PARIS (October 21) - Defying French justice and angering Holocaust victims, Maurice Papon has fled the country to avoid being jailed for his role in deporting Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II.

Papon, 89, a former high-ranking police official in the pro-Nazi Vichy regime, said in a statement yesterday that he has chosen exile to uphold his honor.
He did not divulge his whereabouts in the statement, but his lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, said his client might be on the Channel Islands of Jersey or Guernsey.

Leaving France for another European Union country would have been easy for Papon as there are no border controls.

French Justice Minister Elisabeth Guigou said she told prosecutors to issue an arrest warrant for Papon. Prime Minister Lionel Jospin condemned the flight and said France would ask for Papon’s extradition if it turns out he is in a foreign country.

Papon’s decision to flee "is a final sign of indifference, contempt, and provocation with regard to all victims of the Holocaust," Jospin said.

Papon was sentenced in April 1998 to 10 years in prison for complicity in crimes against humanity for his role, as secretary-general of the Bordeaux region in 1942 and 1943, in the arrest and deportation of more than 1,500 Jews.

On the second day of the six-month trial, the longest held in France, Judge Jean-Louis Castagn de decided against keeping Papon in jail during the hearing.

The result was that in spite of his condemnation, Papon walked out of the court free as his lawyers decided to appeal the sentence. Any "regular" convicted criminal must await the appeal in jail, according to French law. Papon was the only exception.

For French Holocaust victims, who put up with 18 years of legal delays to bring Papon to justice, his flight was a painful reminder that despite his conviction, he may still enjoy protection at the highest levels.

"During the war, French authorities showed absolutely no sign of laxity or incompetence when it came to arresting Jewish children, but now, it seems, they've let him get away," said Therese Stopnicki, 68, whose two sisters, Rachel and Nelly, then five and three, were among the children Papon ordered plucked from a safe home outside Bordeaux and deported.

"It sickens me," Stopnicki said in a telephone interview from her home in Mulhouse. "We cannot heal our wounds, we cannot complete the grieving until he is behind bars."

"The masks have fallen once and for all," said lawyer Alain Levy. "He was certainly better at saving his own skin than saving elderly Jews from Bordeaux."

On Tuesday, Papon published a long statement in the daily Sud-Ouest, saying he was the victim of a witch-hunt launched by judges "under influence." A few paragraphs later, Papon named the source of his troubles: French Jewish lawyers Serge Klarsfeld and his son, Arno, both representing relatives of Papon's victims.

Klarsfeld told The Jerusalem Post that Papon was adamantly opposed to the position adopted by French President Jacques Chirac, who said at the 1995 commemoration of the infamous 1941 round-up of Jews in the Paris area by French police that "that day, France had perpetrated the irreparable."

"We are on the same wavelength as President Chirac" said Klarsfeld. "In the immediate aftermath of the war, French society acquitted the operational
agents [of collaboration with the Nazis]. Papon's condemnation in 1998 by a popular jury showed that French society has changed."

Klarsfeld added that he and Arno had repeatedly requested - in vain - that Papon be placed under police supervision to prevent his disappearance. "Papon was under constant police protection, to circumvent a highly improbable violent action against him. This didn't prevent him from fleeing, since the policemen had no orders to limit his movements," Klarsfeld said.

"We decided to ask for sanctions against the Court of Bordeaux, [which] finally enabled, through its lack of action, the disappearance of a man convicted of being accessory to crimes against humanity.

"French citizens who don't pay their parking tickets or traffic violations are denied the right to travel abroad. To the Court of Bordeaux, traffic violations are probably more important than crimes against humanity."

Asked why Papon wasn't under police control, a spokesman for the French Justice Ministry said: "There are no legal texts that enabled us to ask for it."

Papon's lawyers said they will bring the case to the European Court of Justice in Strasbourg. The court repeatedly condemned France for compelling people to be jailed while appealing a sentence. Papon's lawyers may also ask Chirac for a pardon.


Breaking News

10/20 17:19 CDT

Pius XII felt Nazi atrocities exaggerated

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) - Pope Pius XII told the United States in 1942 he thought reports of German atrocities against Jews were exaggerated and that he could not denounce the Nazis without criticizing the Soviet Union, according to a newly-discovered document in the U.S. National Archives.

The document -- a secret report by the U.S. envoy to the Vatican during the war on a 40-minute meeting he had with the pontiff on Dec. 30, 1942 -- also quoted Pius as saying that he would, however, publicly condemn the Allies if they carried out a threat to bomb Rome.

The letter by envoy Harold Tittmann's to the U.S. Secretary of State, a copy of which was obtained by Reuters on Wednesday, offers new insight into the wartime thinking of Pius XII, who has been frequently criticized by Jewish groups and others for failing to speak out against the Nazis during the war.

A controversial new book by British journalist John Cornwell, "Hitler's Pope, the Secret History of Pius XII," says the pontiff minimized the Holocaust because he was a Germanophile and that he held anti-Semitic views before becoming pope in 1939.
Pius, during his meeting with Tittmann, is surprised when the diplomat tells him that there are people who did not accept that he had finally publicly condemned the Nazis in his famous Christmas message of 1942 in which he declared that people were being killed because of their "race and nationality." Many thought that the message was too indirect.

'Exaggeration for purposes of propaganda'

Tittmann said in his "strictly confidential" four-page report, "(the pope) stated that he 'feared' that there was foundation for the atrocity reports of the Allies, but he led me to believe that he felt there had been some exaggeration for purposes of propaganda.'"

The diplomat added, "With regard to his Christmas message, the pope gave me the impression that he was sincere in believing that he had spoken therein clearly enough to satisfy all those who had been insisting in the past that he utter some word of condemnation of the Nazi atrocities and he seemed surprised when I told him that I thought there were some who did not share his belief.

"He said that he thought that it was plain to everyone he was referring to the Poles, Jews, and hostages when he declared that hundreds of thousands of persons had been killed or tortured through no fault of their own, sometimes only because of their race and nationality. He explained that when talking of atrocities he could not name the Nazis without mentioning at the same time the Bolsheviks, and this, he thought, might not be wholly pleasing to the Allies.'"

Threats to bomb Rome

The American diplomat said the pope was concerned about threats being made over the BBC that the Allies would bomb Rome, although "he did not himself feel in the least apprehensive because he could not imagine that the Allies would do such a thing when there was so little to gain and so much to lose.'"

Tittmann said, "He made it clear that if Rome was bombed, he would be obliged to make a solemn and public protest and added that he was certain that the combined effect of the bombing and protest of Catholics throughout the world could only be hurtful to the cause of the Allies.'"

The Vatican has rejected accusations that Pius was an anti-Semite and Nazi sympathizer who turned a blind eye to the Holocaust. "He certainly was not (an anti-Semite). He helped the Jews," said Father Pierre Blet, the Vatican's leading historian on the Second World War.

Blet, author of a new book on the subject, said at a press conference earlier this month, "The public silence (of Pius XII) was the cover for a secret activity through Vatican embassies and bishoprics to try to stop the deportations.'"

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues**
Here's a quick run through today's assets news -- no muss, no fuss.

As you may know, the Jewish weeklies come out today, below is a taste of what people will be reading over the weekend. I gather the extended version of the M. Shapiro / JTA piece is in this week's Washington Jewish Week, which I do not yet have. Also, there was to be a S. Ain story in The (NY) Jewish Week, but it's not in the online version. If it's in the hard copy, would somebody please fax it to me at 202.371.5678? Thank you.

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Cheers,

Stu

U.S. Admits It Looted Jewish Property

By Michael Shapiro
OCTOBER 18, 1999 Washington

A new account of how U.S. soldiers at the end of World War II looted a train filled with Hungarian Jews' property may prompt other countries to search dark chapters of their own histories in an attempt to make restitution.

That is the assessment of several members of the presidential commission that researched the fate of the "Hungarian Gold Train," which was filled with Jewish property stolen by the Nazis that later ended up in the hands of U.S. servicemen.

"I think we knew when this commission was set up there would be some dark spots on our own record," said U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, who also serves as the Clinton administration's point man on
Holocaust restitution issues.

However, Eizenstat, who sits on the commission, stressed that the panel's openness in detailing those spots will "send a strong signal" to similar commissions in other countries.

"The worst thing we can do is suppress things because it's a U.S. issue," said Miles Lerman, the chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council and a member of the commission.

"The more windows you open, the more air you let in, the healthier the process," he added.

The Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States said last week it uncovered documents detailing how U.S. infantry forces on May 16, 1945, seized a train in Werfen, Austria, that was filled with paintings, rugs, china, gold, watches and other valuables looted from Hungarian Jews by the Nazis and their Hungarian collaborators.

This account of the American looting comes several years after the United States and Jewish groups began pressing Swiss banks and other European banks and companies to make restitution for the valuables and labor that was stolen from European Jewry.

The report, which is preliminary, buttresses those efforts because it "indicates that we are not afraid to look at our own government," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, which has been pressing foreign countries to return Nazi-looted property to their rightful owners.

While international law and U.S. policy required the return of looted arts and cultural items to the governments of the countries from which they were taken, U.S. officials decided that the origin and ownership of the valuables on the train were "not identifiable," according to the report released last week by the commission.

Hungarian Jewish leaders at the time criticized the decision, arguing that if they had access to the contents of the train they could help restitute the property.

Last Friday, one day after the report was issued, Hungary's Jewish leaders said they will seek to have the looted treasures returned to their rightful owners.

While much of the assets were auctioned in New York with proceeds going to refugee organizations, many other items such as rugs, china and crystal were simply taken by top American generals to display in their homes and offices, according to the report.

The whereabouts of those objects are unknown.

Other less valuable objects such as watches, jewelry and cameras were sold in U.S. Army Exchange stores.

Other property was stolen from military warehouses.

Researchers for the commission also concluded that 1,181 paintings on the train were returned to Austria rather than to Hungary, their country of origin, in part because the United States was leery of Hungary's move toward Communist rule and because U.S. officials may have wanted Austria,
which they considered Nazi-occupied territory, to have valuables to use in war claim negotiations.

The artworks' whereabouts are currently unknown.

This story was furnished by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

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Source: The Jewish Press -- "The Largest Orthodox Anglo-Jewish Weekly in the World"


THE FULL STORY

U.S. Army Helped Itself To Holocaust Loot

By Esther Finkle

At the end World War II, American soldiers looted a train carrying the wealth of Hungary's Jews, according to a report released last week by the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets.

The report found that American officials allowed Nazi loot from a train out of Hungary to be sold, requisitioned by U.S. generals or handed over to Austria instead of returned to Jews from whom it was seized during World War II.

The commission, established by Congress to examine Holocaust assets and claims for their return, intends to interview surviving members of the U.S. forces in Austria and investigate individual claims of Hungarian Holocaust victims in an attempt to clarify how decisions were made on handling items from the train.

The report maintains that the reason for the valuables not being returned to their rightful owners was that the United States declared them "unidentifiable."

A 1948 cable from then Secretary of State George Marshall stated that "U.S. Commander [Gen. Mark Clark] determined that the contents were . . . unidentifiable as to owners and in the view of territorial changes in Hungary . . . restitution to Hungary [is] therefore not feasible."

The Germany-bound gold train, one of several trains sent from Hungary by the Nazis, was carrying gold, silver, paintings, gems and furs worth over $200 million in 1945 dollars; the collected wealth of about 800,000 Hungarian Jews confiscated on orders from Adolph Eichmann.

As the train left Hungarian borders, several robbery attempts were foiled by train guards. American servicemen seized the train, which was found hidden in the Tauren Tunnel 60 miles south of Salzburg, on May 16, 1945.

French troops appropriated two truckloads of riches after the Hungarian official commanding the train abandoned it and tried to escape, but the Americans found most of the 24 cars intact when they began unloading it in July.

International law and U.S. policy called for the return of looted arts and cultural items to the governments of the countries from which they were taken. The commission's report indicates that American troops disregarded
regulations which ordered the preservation of victims' assets and their return to the country from which they were taken.

The commission emphasized that its findings are preliminary and many sketchy details and unanswered questions remain. The commission is questioning why General Clark, commander of United States forces in Austria, deemed the property unidentifiable when it appears there was some information about the original owners.

The documents fail to confirm exactly what knowledge the American servicemen had as to the origin of the property. At least one document refers to the train's contents as "property of the Hungarian state," while others verify that Hungarian officials and guards questioned after the train's capture told the Americans that most of the property had been taken from Jews. There was also a report that listed the names of people from whom some of the items on the train were taken.

The commission found that the commander of United States forces in the region, General Harry J. Collins requisitioned "the very best quality and workmanship available in the land"- chinaware, silverware, carpets and other adornments from the train to furnish his Austrian villa.

The report added, "Numerous high ranking officers of the American forces in Austria appropriated Hungarian Jewish treasures found on the gold train for the decoration of their residences." General Collins began making demands soon afterward on the warehouse where the property was stored, according to the report.

"We suspected when we set this commission up that there might be some dark chapters in our immediate postwar history," said Stuart Eizenstat, U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary and a Clinton Administration representative on the commission.

"We want to establish the principle that the United States is willing to hold itself to the same high standard to which it has held others."

The commission's findings may provide incentive for other countries to examine their histories in an attempt to make restitution. Eizenstat stressed that the report will "send a strong signal" to similar commissions in other countries.

American Jewish Congress Executive Director Phil Baum said reports that wedding rings and other valuables of Nazi victims were stolen were "shocking and disheartening."

"The U.S. army valiantly fought to the death against Adolf Hitler to destroy evil. Not to permit some of those who fought to enrich themselves at the expense of Hitler's victims." Baum added that "those of all ranks who did these vile acts" should be disciplined.

The commission found that more than 1,100 paintings were given to the Austrian government, in breach of U.S. policy and the finery, from silver platters to loose diamonds, was sold at an auction in New York. Less valuable goods were sold in the U.S. Army Exchange, according to the commission. Ernst Bacher, an Austrian cultural official told the commission that "a portion of the property has been restituted," but he failed to provide further details.
Hungarian Jewish groups have been seeking the return of their treasures since December, 1945, according to the report. They affirm that if they would have had access to the train's contents back then, the chances of identifying ownership would have been greater.

Hungarian Jews are now petitioning to have the valuables returned to their rightful owners.

Gabor Sebes, Director of the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation, said his group will "proceed with the necessary steps to have the treasures returned to Hungary."

http://biz.yahoo.com/rf/991021lbe4.html

Thursday October 21, 11:06 pm Eastern Time

Germany's Allianz to turn over Holocaust-era files

(recasts, adds details from Allianz, comments)

WASHINGTON, Oct 21 (Reuters) - German insurance giant Allianz said on Thursday it would release the names of 150,000 policy-holders to Israel's Holocaust memorial for checking to see if they were victims of Hitler's Nazi war machine.

The names of those who held policies with large sum endowments may include some Jews whose benefits were paid to the Nazis, a Jewish group said.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said the insurance company announced the agreement at the end of a two-day meeting in Washington of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims, headed by former Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger.

Under the agreement, Allianz will make the names and dates of birth available to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial center in Jerusalem to check if they were Jewish policy holders, an Allianz spokesman said.

Steinberg said that of the 150,000, thousands may have belonged to Holocaust-era Jewish clients and either were not paid or were paid to the Nazis.

He estimated there were more than 1,000 policies whose claims were paid to the Nazis. "In effect we are talking about the murderers of the policyholders receiving the benefits of the policies," Steinberg said.

The commission had delayed the launch of its claims-resolution process partly because the list from Allianz was not available. The company had said it would be too time-consuming to prepare such a list because it has records of 1.3 million policies from that era.

Allianz had been the only one of five insurance companies on the commission looking into Holocaust-era claims that had not made public a list of unpaid policies.

"We never refused to give our lists, but Allianz has always underlined that it is a very time-consuming exercise to go through all the files," Allianz spokesman Emilio Galli-Zugaro said. He said the company has maintained a telephone hot line for people seeking to find out if they had
outstanding life insurance policies owed to them or family members.

Also serving on the commission were representatives of U.S. state insurance regulators and Jewish groups, including the World Jewish Congress.

As a result of its action on Thursday, Steinberg said his group will recommend to a meeting of Jewish groups in New York next week that no action be taken on a resolution to boycott Allianz.

Last week California Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush demanded that state Gov. Gray Davis review Allianz's proposed $4.68 billion takeover of U.S. money manager Pimco Advisors Holdings LP, a possible prelude to blocking the transaction.

"We very much welcome the decision of the Jewish groups and the World Jewish Congress to take no action against Allianz," Galli-Zugaro said.


Friday October 22 8:30 AM ET

Swiss Catch Papon; Illness May Slow Handover

By Elif Kaban

GENEVA (Reuters) - The brief flight from justice of 89-year-old French war criminal Maurice Papon ended when police arrested him in a luxurious Swiss hotel in one of Europe's most exclusive ski resorts, Swiss officials said Friday.

French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin immediately demanded Papon's extradition from Switzerland. But French diplomatic sources said the former Vichy official's handover to face jail in France might be delayed by an unspecified illness.

Swiss police seized the aged fugitive Thursday evening in the mountainous Bernese Oberland in German-speaking Switzerland on a French arrest warrant.

Papon was put in a special holding area for prisoners at Berne's Inselspital hospital, a spokesman there said.

"Papon was brought to the hospital about 2 a.m. (midnight GMT)," hospital spokesman Bernhard Kummer told journalists. Kummer gave no details on what ailed Papon, but said, "I assume that his condition is not too serious."

Inselspital is Switzerland's only hospital with a special prison ward -- five underground rooms that could each hold two people. Papon was alone in his room.

A brief police statement said the former Vichy official, sentenced to 10 years in jail in 1998 for helping deport Jews to Nazi camps and now on the run to escape jail for crimes against humanity, was arrested overnight.

French Police Head For Border To Pick Him Up

French police left early Friday for the Swiss border to pick up Papon. Police sources said he was expected to be taken to Fresnes prison, south of Paris, but were awaiting confirmation from Swiss authorities.
Papon was arrested in the Posthotel Roessli in the swanky Swiss ski resort of Gstaad, where he had checked into Room 115 under the false name of Robert de la Rochefoucauld Saturday.

He was alone except for a woman he identified as his niece who stayed for one night in a separate room.

"He was very quiet, very unobtrusive," said Lars Widmer, son of the hotel's owner. "He did not look very healthy, but we were not concerned."

Papon did not put up resistance when cantonal police arrived to take him in, but seemed depressed, Widmer said, quoting reports from his father and hotel staff there at the time.

Swiss media said Papon was lured from his room by a message that a fax had arrived for him. When confronted by police, he complained he was unwell and asked for a doctor, who determined Papon was fit enough to be transported into custody.

Swiss officials declined to give the circumstances of the arrest ahead of a news conference set for 1430 GMT.

There has been no word on when they would extradite Papon, whose presence embarrassed a country trying to repair an image tarnished by close economic links with the Nazis during World War Two and charges that it hoarded Holocaust victims' assets.

Chirac Welcomes Papon's Arrest

French President Jacques Chirac said the arrest of Papon showed that justice had prevailed.

"The arrest of Maurice Papon by Swiss authorities re-establishes the state of law," Chirac said in a statement. "I hope that the primacy of law will be ensured and the decisions of French justice respected."

In the same vein French Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, possibly the person most responsible for Papon being brought to trial, rejoiced at the arrest Friday, saying: "Justice triumphed in the end."

"The fact that he was caught in Switzerland and not in Brazil or Chile probably means he's going to be brought back soon," Klarsfeld, who began campaigning for Papon to be brought to trial back in 1981, told Radio France-Info.

Papon went into hiding last week shortly before his appeal against his conviction. He declared through his lawyers that he preferred exile to a 10-year jail sentence for his role in helping deport 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps in World War Two.

Papon, who was the pro-Nazi Vichy regime's second-ranking official in the Bordeaux region, escaped France's purge of collaborators after World War Two and went on to a distinguished career as Paris police chief and budget minister.

Switzerland confirmed Thursday that Papon was in the western Swiss town of Martigny from October 11 to 15 and that it had issued an order barring him from entering the country.
But border controls between Switzerland and France are lax and it is rare for travelers to be required to show passports at many entry points.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/19991022/aponline085827_000.htm

Papon Captured in Switzerland

By Balz Bruppacher
Associated Press Writer
Friday, Oct. 22, 1999; 8:58 a.m. EDT

BERN, Switzerland -- Maurice Papon, the former Vichy official who fled France rather than face jail for his role in sending Jews to Nazi death camps, has been arrested in Switzerland, federal police said today.

Papon was arrested Thursday night at the Hotel Roessli in the mountain resort of Gstaad, about 60 miles south of the capital, Bern, Lars Widmer, the son of the hotel manager, told The Associated Press.

"My father thought he wasn't very distinctive," Widmer said. "He saw Papon's picture in the paper and said to me, 'He looks almost like the man in room 115.'"

Papon, 89, was taken to the hospital after apparently becoming ill soon after he was arrested. Bernhard Kummer, spokesman for University Hospital, Bern, said Papon was being cared for in a "special place" within the hospital. He declined to give details on Papon's health.

An arrest warrant for Papon was issued Thursday in Bordeaux, France, after he failed to appear in court. In a statement Wednesday, Papon, a former high-ranking police official in France's pro-Nazi Vichy regime, said he had chosen exile to uphold his honor.

His flight was made possible by a controversial decision by the Bordeaux court at the beginning of his trial in 1997. The court accepted medical testimony that Papon was in poor health and freed him for the duration of the trial and the appeals period after he had spent three days in jail.

His disappearance triggered widespread criticism of the French Interior Ministry for letting him slip out of the country. It was also an embarrassment for French officials who did not place judicial controls on Papon or revoke his passport.

In Paris, French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin said, "I am naturally deeply satisfied by this. It is not for me, I am going to tell you, totally a surprise."

Jospin was in contact with Swiss President Ruth Dreifuss to ask her to ensure Papon's quick repatriation, French officials said. Jospin had said earlier that France would ask for Papon's extradition if it turned out he was in a foreign country. How or when he might be extradited was unclear.

Lawmakers at the National Assembly, the French parliament, broke into applause at the news that Papon had been arrested.

Papon was convicted in April 1998 and sentenced to 10 years in jail for complicity in crimes against humanity for his role in deporting 1,590 Jews
from Bordeaux. Most deportees later died at the Auschwitz death camp.

Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld, the head of the Association of Sons and Daughters of Deported Jews of France, told France Info radio that Papon’s arrest represented “a triumph of justice.”

“I expect that he will return to France very soon and will be incarcerated,” Klarsfeld said.

Swiss officials said Thursday that Papon stayed under a false name at a hotel in the western Swiss town of Martigny from Oct. 11 to 16.

On Oct. 14, authorities issued an order barring Papon from entering Switzerland. Police authorities say they were unaware that Papon was already in the country.

Papon is the highest-ranking official of the pro-Nazi Vichy regime to be convicted of crimes against humanity committed during World War II.

The trial opened old wounds about French collaboration with the Nazis, and his flight has raised questions about the nation’s determination to confront its role in the Holocaust.

The Court of Cassation, France’s highest court, ruled Thursday that Papon lost his right of appeal by failing to report to prison as required before the hearing.

Several calls of "Bravo" were heard in the courtroom after the decision rejecting Papon’s appeal was read. Some elderly relatives of those who died had tears in their eyes. Others smiled with relief.

"I’m really, really happy. My thoughts are with my mother and all of Papon’s other victims," said Georges Geldman, who was 10 years old when Papon, then deputy prefect of Bordeaux, had him and his mother arrested. She died at Auschwitz.

http://search.nytimes.com/search/daily/bin/fastweb?getdoc+site+iib-site+33+0+wAAA+holocaust

October 22, 1999

French Court Upholds Conviction of Vichy-Era Official

By SUZANNE DALEY

PARIS -- On Thursday France’s highest court upheld the conviction of Maurice Papon, the 89-year-old former civil servant who announced Wednesday that he would flee the country rather than begin his 10-year jail sentence for sending hundreds of Jews to Nazi death camps.

Inside the court, Holocaust survivors smiled, shouted bravo and wept.

French officials immediately issued an arrest warrant for Papon, who disappeared from his home near Paris more than a week ago but who has been issuing statements through his lawyers.

Under French law, Papon was supposed to surrender to authorities Wednesday to begin his sentence before his appeal could be heard.
But instead, the combative and articulate former Vichy government official said in a statement that he would "go into exile" rather than spend his last years in prison.

Papon, who has always maintained his innocence despite his signature on numerous deportation orders, said that in deciding on exile, he was making an honorable choice that had been made by "many noted men in history."

The third-highest-ranking official in the Bordeaux area during the war, Papon later rose to become a budget minister in France's postwar government. His trial, which began in 1997, was the longest and most expensive in France's modern history. It forced the country to confront a part of its past that many had tried to forget.

As the court made its ruling Thursday, government officials scrambled to explain how Papon could have escaped so easily. Despite his conviction, nothing had been done to restrict his movements in any way, and he had even been allowed to keep his passport.

Justice Minister Elisabeth Guigou said Papon had benefited from a loophole in the law because he had been released from jail during his trial because of poor health. Once he was released, she said, there was no legal basis by which to control his movements. She promised to submit legislation in January to close the loophole.

Speculation about where Papon had gone continued throughout the day. Swiss officials confirmed that Papon was in Switzerland last week in the western town of Martigny, though his current whereabouts remained unknown.

Under French law, if defendants do not turn themselves in to spend the night in prison, their appeals are automatically rejected. In court Thursday morning, the prosecutor in the case, Bruno Cotte, urged the court not to make an exception in Papon's case.

"Maurice Papon, who has deliberately chosen not to turn himself in, using the press to create a sort of indecent and invidious aura of suspense, must now see the common law applied," Cotte argued.

The court broke with its usual protocol and allowed Papon's lawyers to make their legal arguments for a delay. But at 5 p.m. it rejected the arguments, ruling that Papon lost his right of appeal when he failed to report to prison. The ruling closes the door on any further appeals.

Papon's chief lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, said after the hearing that the court ruling justified Papon's decision to flee. He said he would try to take the case before the European Court of Human Rights to condemn the French courts. "We have no other choice," he said.

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http://www.globes.co.il/cgi-bin/Serve_Arena/pages/English/1.2.1.10

130,000 Applications in Israel for Swiss Holocaust Survivors Fund Grants

By Itamar Levin

129,811 requests were filed for grants from the Swiss Holocaust Survivors Fund. If all the requests are approved, each survivor will receive $450. The number of requests was over double the expected number.
The Swiss fund was founded at the beginning of 1997 by the large banks, the Central Bank, and leading employers' organizations. The fund has no connection to compensation in the framework of the $1.4 billion general arrangement with the Swiss banks.

According to the Disabled Rehabilitation Bureau in the Ministry of Finance, which is coordinating the requests, approximately 130,000 requests were filed. The cutoff date for filing was October 14. The Bureau received nearly 98,000 telephone calls concerning aid from the fund.

The $180 million fund has allocated $59 million to Israel.

Published by Israel’s Business Arena on October 21, 1999

http://www.naplesnews.com/today/florida/d370472a.htm

Senate candidate seeks free health care for Holocaust victims

Friday, October 22, 1999

Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE - Insurance Commissioner Bill Nelson detailed a plan Thursday to provide free home health care to an estimated 10,000 Holocaust survivors living in Florida.

Nelson, who is also running for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Connie Mack, was in Washington where he urged the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims to approve up to $10 million in start-up money for the plan.

The money would be taken from a humanitarian account paid for by companies suspected of not honoring survivors' insurance policies. Additionally, companies would be required to pay millions more during the years Holocaust survivors need the care.

Nelson said giving immediate relief to survivors in the form of free home health care would allow them to live out the remainder of their lives in dignity.

"Many of these Holocaust victims are elderly and frail," Nelson said. "This would give them some compensation now, while we continue our work to get insurance companies to honor any unpaid claims."

Under the plan, Nelson said, a nurse or health care assistant could come to a survivor's home to provide medical services as prescribed by a doctor. This would be available to Holocaust survivors free-of-charge for the remainder of their lives, he said.

Nelson, who is unopposed in the Democratic primary for the Senate nomination, said only Holocaust survivors would be eligible.
The Jewish Post of NY -- Oct 22, 1999

The Holocaust Industry

by Gad Nahshon

Abba Eban used to remark, "There is no business such as Sho(w)a business." He made a joke, but the rise of Holocaust industry should be a concern to Jews and Holocaust survivors as well. This "industry" has been mushrooming in America. It became the Midas touch of many scholars, writers and publishing houses. Scholars, in order to be "in," are writing about the Holocaust. They find new "aspects," such as: The Holocaust and philosophy. The Holocaust and the gays. Most of these new Holocaust "experts" do not understand German, Yiddish, Hebrew or Eastern European languages. But they write and write. The Holocaust industry is based on marketing and on the quest to make profits, but the writers can hide their motives behind the slogan: "Remember, do not forget." They are smart for who will dare to question their "dedication" to the Jewish tragedy?

Of course, America cherishes freedom of press. You can write stories about "Treblinka" based on your neighbor, a Jewish Holocaust survivor's eyewitnesses to the Nazi crimes. But those who write today know that the Jewish establishment since the 1980's decided to espouse Holocaust survivors as its new "stars," replacing the Israeli "stars."

Many honest scholars already have tried to explain the timing element of this "industry." It is no secret that Jewish organizations in the past ignored the issue of the survivors as well as the issue of the Holocaust, or "Shoah." I'll note that in Israel, the scholars tend to use "Shoah," the Hebrew term for "Holocaust." Why? Because people used the term "Holocaust" to describe their own catastrophe. The African Americans, for example, compare "slavery" to the Holocaust. Jews and Israelis believe that "Shoah" was unique to the Jews. We should and must protest against the new tendency of trivialization of the Shoah the same way that we protest against the denials of this catastrophe. Many new writers tend to use statistics in order to show that other people suffered heavily in World War II, but no national lost 6 million people. Actually 6 million out of a total of 16 million Jews in 1939!

One objection to the "Holocaust Industry" stems from the fear that someone will write a book in which he will distort the values of the Holocaust as an educational program when we teach Jewish or Israeli history. We should have a health collective memory of the Holocaust. We should integrate "Holocaust consciousness" into our system of values and into our system of education. We also can and must draw conclusions. For example, the relationship and the feedback between leaders and masses. I think that the Holocaust demonstrates the "crisis of Jewish leadership."

Peter Novick, who is Jewish and a well-known and respected historian from the University of Chicago, decided to join this "industry" and also to be "in." He is the author of "That Noble Dream" and other books. Now he decided, perhaps too late, to join the club. His book, "The Holocaust in American Life," was published by Houghton Mifflin Company, New York, 1999.

As we always do with books, we looked into his notes and bibliography.

Sure: Novick ignored primary sources. He ignored oral history. It is not
clear if he understands German, Yiddish or Hebrew. It is not clear if he
defines himself as an expert on the Holocaust. Did he write at least one
original article on a topic of the Holocaust?

So Peter Novick simply reviewed or surveyed articles, books and
secondary sources, rather than original documents!

One might expect from Novick modest statements or remarks. But in his
books, Novick expresses a high degree of self-confidence. He raises good
issues, such as the timing of the mushrooming of Holocaust museums in
America. He also asked: "Why America, this kind of Holocaust consciousness?
Why in America and not in Israel?" But he never gives an answer.

My criticism of this book is based on the fact that Peter Novick has a
personal agenda. His attitude to the "Holocaust consciousness" is always
negative. He does not deny the Holocaust. He just would like to minimize
its role in our life. Often, he said: "You the Jews are not the only ones.
. ." Or: one cannot and should not draw conclusions from the Holocaust
experience on national trauma. Novick's approach to this issue smells bad.
One can feel it between the lines. So he suggested, "let's forget about the
Holocaust," or "Jews used the Holocaust as a means to stop assimilation."
For example, he rushed to tell the reader that even Rafael Lamkin, who
developed the concept of "genocide," did not relate only to Jews but also
to other nations, like the Poles.

When discussing facts from the Holocaust or "the other planet," Novick
expressed a "chutzpah." For example, he claimed, without researching in
Israel or Germany, that the Nazis did not produce soap ("Borit-Hebrew")
from human fat. Of course they did! They had a special institution to
research this terrible idea of modern cannibalism.

One more example that really made me sick: In discussing the Palestinian
issue, he stated that the Mufti or Haj Amin Al-Husseini, the leader of the
Palestinians before 1948, did not have relations with the Nazis. First, you
wonder why Novick suddenly defended the Mufti. I think that Novick has some
kind of a radical agenda. Perhaps he believes in the post- Zionist idea or
in the concept in which Zionism is defined as a pure Jewish imperialism in
Palestine. Second, the Mufti met Hitler and Eichmann. He pressed them to
kill Jews and help him to stop Jewish immigration to Palestine. The Mufti
also organized Muslim pro- Nazi divisions.

It is very strange that Novick, without research, rushes to save the
prestige of the most Palestinian extremist who called on his people to kill
the 600,000 Jews in Palestine. As I noted, it smells bad. . .

Novick used secondary sources to prove his own agenda, saying that the
"Holocaust Industry" is detrimental to the Jewish interests. I would like
to note:

(1) It is a mistake to quote time and again in his 373 page book all
kinds of Jewish writers who are not experts on the Holocaust. Also, he does
not tell the reader about these writers. He used some books on the
Holocaust and defamed great scholarly books by David Weiman as: "Bad
History." Bad history? What should someone write about Novick's book?

(2) Novick claimed to work a few years on his "The Holocaust in American
Life" but he suffered from the fact that he did not conduct even a minimum
of original research. For example, to review text books used in the Jewish
schools. What is written over there on the Holocaust? When were these text
books updated? And so on. He did not use a sample of public opinion
attitudes of Gentiles to the Holocaust and its ramifications. But how could he omit the unique crusade of the Irgun or the "Bergson Group" and Ben Hecht in the 1940's against the silence of America, against the behavior of F.D.R.'s administration?

Okay. Let's assume that he is not willing to give them the right recognition. But how could he omit the rise and fall of the "Goldberg Commission" (1981-1984). How can a serious scholar ignore the discussions which took place inside this Commission which had 28 representatives from the plethora of Jewish organizations and movements? Well, this is a terrible price of writing a book whose contents are based on secondary sources.

This "Commission" was the first and the last attempt by the establishment to answer the question: Were we our brothers' and sister's keepers? Novick does not like to discuss this "taboo." He knows that Americans are still very emotional and sensitive to this "Brother keeper syndrome."

To conclude, Novick developed a line of negativism to the "Holocaust consciousness" and he likes the Jews and the establishment which stimulates its rising to contain the scope, to limit the "Industry," and the "Industry" that he himself is part of.

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Chicago Tribune -- 10/22/99

THERE'S NO DEBATE: HOLOCAUST FORUM RAISES VITAL ISSUES

Steve Kloehn

October 22, 1999

Rabbis, on the whole, are not opposed to a little disputation.

And when the Chicago Board of Rabbis asked University of Chicago historian Peter Novick and Rabbi Herman Schaalman to speak at the same forum on Novick's recently released book "The Holocaust in American Life," they had good reason to expect some differences of opinion.

Novick spent 10 years researching how Americans over several generations viewed the Holocaust. He came to the conclusion that the responses tell more about the respondents and their milieu than they do about the truth of the Holocaust itself. Novick's book questions the central role the Holocaust has taken in American Jewish identity over the last 20 years and suggests other motives--international politics, cultural competition, careerism--that have played into Holocaust remembrance.

Schaalman narrowly escaped the horrors of the Holocaust and lost family members in the death camps. Decades later, he was among a handful of Jewish leaders who shaped the depiction of the Holocaust in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C.

Secular skeptic, religious believer. outside observer, passionate participant. South Side, North Side. It would be hard to find two world views better primed for disagreement.

When the Chicago rabbis gathered in a Skokie synagogue this week, Novick--
who does not shy away from disputation himself--spoke his mind as sharply
to them as he had in his book.

In a "discourse of competing claims to victimization" in America in the
1970s and 1980s, Novick said, "the Holocaust was the trump card slammed
down on the table."

"Many American Jews appear to need a self-understanding as victims to
retain their Jewishness," he added.

As their identification with Holocaust victims became a more central part
of the Holocaust discourse, Novick argued, it became commonplace for some
American Jews to ask themselves whether the gentiles they knew would be
willing to hide them from a similar fate today.

"Brooding about this coming about in late 1990s America seems to me a
sickness," Novick said.

Schaalman, in his response, contended that the Holocaust was truly
unprecedented in history, in its design to kill Jews around the world--not
just to defeat or weaken, but to eliminate an entire people.

"If this is ignored, as (Novick's) book surely does, then any treatment of
the Holocaust loses meaning," Schaalman said. "Ultimately, the
understanding of the Holocaust is theological. If that is not accepted,
then all treatment of the Holocaust is superficial."

In the months since its publication, Novick's book has received wide and
widely varied attention. Many reviewers have praised its willingness to
raise difficult questions and examine them in light of the historical
evidence available.

Others, especially in parts of academia and the Jewish establishment, have
blasted the book, the methodology and Novick himself.

One might have expected a brotherhood of rabbis to be among the toughest
audiences of all.

But in the end, several of the rabbis in attendance had nice things to say
about Novick's work. One said that it challenged the American Jewish
community to face up to an emptiness at the heart of modern Jewish
identity.

Another applauded Novick's contention that Jews, by making the Holocaust a
central part of the way they portray themselves to the rest of the world,
have limited themselves; as Novick said, there will be no second Jewish
museum on the Mall to depict all the other aspects of Judaism.

Perhaps the rabbis and Novick have something more basic in common, as well.
Novick and Schaalman could talk all day without coming to a point of
agreement, but they seem to share an uneasiness that popular forms of
Holocaust remembrance are not the final word on the subject, a sense that
in the process of creating a cultural consensus, something was lost. For
Novick, the solution is to begin stripping away layers of politics,
sociology and psychology that have built up around the event during the
last half-century.

For Schaalman, the quest lies in a different kind of history, the history
of a people who believe they were chosen by God, and whose faith in that
covenant is at the root of monotheism around the world. What does it mean
to be chosen if the Holocaust can happen to the chosen people?

"The main question for those of us sitting here and ultimately for anybody who is a believer is the failure of God in the Shoah (Holocaust)," Schaalman said. "We Jews, and Christians and Muslims, have to seek an answer."

It is a question worth arguing about.

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues**
Jewish Group Threatens German Insurer With Boycott

First it was Swiss banks, now it is a major German insurance company, Allianz, that is being threatened with a boycott for allegedly profiting from the Holocaust and refusing to take responsibility. The World Jewish Congress said it would propose the boycott next week if Allianz still refused to publish a list of unpaid Nazi-era insurance policies. WJC executive director Elia Steinberg said four other major European insurance companies have opened their files to the public.

But a spokesman for Allianz, Emilie Galli-Zugaro, said his company has no unpaid policies. He said the company sold 1.4 million policies from 1922 to 1948 and that an audit of 130,000 of them in 1997-98 found far fewer than 100 unpaid policies. Those policies, he said, had effectively been paid in 1952 when Allianz, under an agreement with Israel and Jewish groups, paid 300 million marks — more than $3 billion in today's valuation — to the Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany. The other firms made no such restitution, he said.

Galli-Zugaro added that Allianz set up a toll-free phone number in 1997 to assist those with an outstanding Nazi-era claim. Of the 2,935 inquiries, only 18 appeared to be valid and payments of less than $10,000 were made to claimants.

Victims Shocked by Escape of French Nazi

Former Vietcong official Mao Chi Poon, 89, who was convicted in a French court last year for crimes against humanity for his role in sending 1,590 Jews to Nazi death camps, fled the country to avoid imprisonment this week, as revealed Wednesday.

Many of his victims and their families expressed shock that authorities had allowed Poon to escape. One told the Associated Press, "During the war, French authorities showed absolutely no sign of laxity or incompetence when it came to arresting Jewish children. But now, it seems, they've let him get away."

Staff Report

1999 Ray of Light Award

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Good morning --

Reaction to the Commission's Gold Train progress report continues to dribble in. (2 articles) In other assets-related news:

Papon (2)  
Poland and the WJRO (1)  
Israelis Honour a Briton's Manouvres (1)

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also at: http://www.centraleurope.com/news.php3?id=103693

Agence France Presse

October 24, 1999 12:04 GMT

SECTION: International news
LENGTH: 400 words
HEADLINE: Hungarian Jews urge US to involve them in Nazi 'gold train' talks
BYLINE: Eszter Szamado
DATELINE: BUDAPEST, Oct 23
BODY:

Hungarian Jews have urged US officials here to involve them in talks with the Budapest government on agreements regarding a so-called Nazi gold train.

The train, which contained items belonging to wealthy Hungarian Jews who died in Nazi death camps in World War II, was looted by US soldiers in Austria in May 1945, according to a recently-published report of the US Presidential Commission on Holocaust Assets.

Hungarian Jews want to take part in investigations to establish the fate of the property robbed from the train and its real value, officials from the Federation of Hungarian Jewish Parishes and the Hungarian Jewish Heritage Foundation said.
"Our experts should be present when exploring the true value," Gabor Sebes of the foundation told MTI news agency.

Hungarian Jews told officials of the US embassy here this week that a number of documents on the train’s cargo could possibly be found in Hungary, he said.

Sebes said that a number of historians and private persons answered calls by the foundation, offering their help or contemporary documents.

"We shall use all possible means to find the heirs of the values on that train," said Sebes.

The embassy officials pledged to forward the Hungarian Jews’ request to the US presidential commission, he said.

Sebes also warned that as far as the foundation knew, there were two Hungarian gold trains. Both were captured by US forces in Austria, one on May 11 and the other on May 16, 1945.

"From the train looted on May 11, some property has over the years been given back to the Hungarian state, but Hungarian Jews received none of it," he told MTI.

According to him, the US commission’s report concentrated on the train, captured on May 16, which among others contained more than 1,100 paintings and two bags of what he called "gold dust".

He said the Hungarian Jews’ foundation wants to see the original inventory of that train in a bid to trace the heirs of the owners of the property.

The Nazi train left Budapest on December 15, 1944, on the orders of Adolf Eichmann, who was in charge of the Nazi extermination of Hungarian Jews.

The train collected wealthy items of Jews who died in the death camps.

About 600,000 Hungarian Jews were exterminated in Nazi death camps in Germany and today’s Poland, shot and dumped in the Danube river in Budapest or killed in forced labour elsewhere.

est/gj

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH
LOAD-DATE: October 24, 1999
Panel Says U.S. Officers Kept Holocaust Loot

WASHINGTON -- U.S. officials allowed Nazi loot from a train out of Hungary to be sold, taken by American generals or turned over to Austria instead of returned to the Jews from whom it was confiscated during World War II, a presidential commission concluded Thursday.

Some valuable items seized from the Hungarian gold train nine days after the May 7, 1945, Allied victory in Europe were put up for auction in New York, and less valuable goods were sold in the U.S. Army Exchange, the commission staff said in a report.

The Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States called it "an example of an egregious failure of the United States to follow its own policy regarding restitution of Holocaust victims' property after World War II."

Appropriation of Nazi loot by U.S. forces took place "at the highest levels," the report, listing the last names of five U.S. generals -- Collins, Laude, Hume, Howard and Linden -- who it said "took valuables from the gold train to furnish their residences and offices."

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 22, 1999

http://jta.virtualjerusalem.com/index.exe?9910244

BEHIND THE HEADLINES
French Nazi collaborator caught, but many wonder who helped him
By Lee Yanowitch

PARIS, Oct. 24 (JTA) - After 18 years of legal maneuvering, convicted Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon is finally behind bars.

But questions persist about the preferential treatment the 89-year-old former Vichy official appeared to have enjoyed.

Swiss police seized Papon late last week in a hotel in the swanky ski resort of Gstaadt and whisked him back to France, where he was taken to a prison hospital.

Papon had fled to Switzerland last week before a Supreme Court appeals hearing, which upheld his 10-year prison sentence for crimes against humanity.

He was found guilty of helping deport some 1,500 Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II, when he was supervisor of Bordeaux's Service for Jewish Questions and the second-ranking official in the area for the pro-Nazi Vichy regime.

At the beginning of his trial in Bordeaux in October 1997, a presiding judge allowed Papon to remain free during the proceedings in an unusual decision that triggered outrage among the civil plaintiffs - most of them relatives of Jews deported to Nazi death camps.

This is why, even after his conviction, Papon stayed out of prison pending his Supreme Court appeal. When he fled into exile on Oct. 10, he was certain he would lose his appeal.

"The question that has to be answered is whether he benefitted from any collusion or help in fleeing," said Alain Jakubowicz, president of a regional branch of the CRIF, France's umbrella group for Jewish organizations, and lawyer for B'nai Brith France in the case.

A number of measures could have been taken to avoid his flight. Months before his initial trial, Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld asked the Justice Ministry to confiscate Papon's passport.

But because of Papon's age and the high positions he had held in postwar France - Paris police chief and budget minister - Klarsfeld's demand was ignored.

"The government and the justice system are fully responsible for Papon's flight out of France. If he had raped a little girl, they would have found some procedural means to prevent him from leaving," said lawyer Arno Klarsfeld.

From the moment the first charges were filed against Papon in 1981, French government officials repeatedly intervened to prevent the case from coming to court and dredging up memories of France's collaboration with its Nazi occupiers. Papon is the only senior French official to be taken to account for Vichy's anti-Semitic policies.

When Papon failed to surrender to police on the eve of his appeal last week, the appeal should have been automatically rejected without a hearing, according to French law. Instead, in another surprise move, court president Hector Milleville allowed lawyers from each side to argue the case.
In the end, the appeal was rejected on the grounds of Papon's absence. "This case has been one exception after another from beginning to end," Jakubowicz said at the time.

Immediately after the appeal was thrown out, France issued an international arrest warrant for Papon. Within a few hours, he was arrested. France's secret service, which now admits that it kept tabs on Papon from the moment he fled, tipped off the Swiss police.

Wishing to avoid a lengthy extradition procedure, Switzerland handed Papon over to French police the following day.

"The implementation of a formal extradition process is not necessary," Swiss Justice Minister Ruth Metzler told a news conference as Papon was helicoptered back to France. "The Cabinet clearly wanted to expel Mr. Papon as quickly as possible."

Dogged by its own wartime demons for the past few years, the Swiss government did not want to be seen as harboring a war criminal.

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Sunday October 24 12:25 AM ET

Jailed Papon A Victim Of System, Lawyers Say

By Crispian Balmer

PARIS (Reuters) - Nazi collaborator Maurice Papon is a victim of the French judicial system and will fight his case in the European Court of Human Rights, his lawyers pledged Saturday after meeting their client in prison.

The 89-year-old Papon, who helped deport hundreds of Jews to Nazi death camps during World War Two, was spending his first full day in jail after the Swiss government Friday thwarted his brief attempt to flee into exile.

"For the time being he is tired, disgusted and contemptuous," said lawyer Jean-Marc Varaut at the gates of the Fresnes prison complex south of Paris.

"His physical tiredness bears no relation to his moral force. He is the victim of an injustice," he added.

The former Vichy official was greeted with boos and catcalls from fellow convicts as he was flown into Fresnes late Friday. He spent the night in the prison hospital, but officials said they were not worried about his health.

Papon Old, Not Sick, Says Prison Director

"We are dealing with an old person, who has had a long trip and is tired," Jean-Marc Chauvet, the regional penitentiary director, told reporters.

Papon was apprehended late Thursday in the Swiss ski resort of Gstaad, hours after France had issued an international warrant for his arrest following his failure to turn up at an appeals hearing.

He was expelled from Switzerland within 24 hours as the authorities swept aside normal extradition procedures. His flight rendered his appeal invalid.
and he must now serve the 10-year jail term handed down to him by a court last year.

Only French President Can Free Papon

Papon disappeared from his home two weeks ago, saying he preferred to go into exile rather than spend the rest of his life behind bars. However, his lawyers said he had not made a serious escape bid.

"He expected to be arrested and made no plans to flee," Varaut said, adding that Papon was now waiting for his lawyers to lodge an appeal at the Strasbourg-based European Court of Human Rights.

The appeal will center on a rule in French law that requires defendants to go to jail the night before their appeals hearing, which his lawyers say is prejudicial. "We think that Strasbourg should make a decision on the illegality of this before the end of the year," Varaut said.

Whatever the court’s decision, it cannot force France to exonerate Papon from his prison term. Only a presidential pardon could secure his release, but this was seen as highly unlikely -- at least for the present.

French politicians and newspapers of all stripes, who had joined forces in branding Papon a coward for fleeing France, Saturday hailed his swift extradition.

"Justice exists. Papon spent the night in prison. He will not be getting out soon and he is old enough to make one think that when he does leave, it will be in a coffin," left-leaning Liberation daily said.

Papon was found guilty by a Bordeaux court last year of involvement in the deportation of 1,500 Jews from southwestern France during World War Two when he was supervisor of the regional Office for Jewish Questions.

He escaped France’s postwar purge of collaborators and built an illustrious career as Paris police chief and budget minister. He is the only senior French official to be tried for implementing the Vichy regime’s anti-Semitic policies.


Monday, October 25, 1999

The WJRO vs. Polish Jewry

Between a third and a fifth of all Polish land originally belonged to Jews. Now world Jewry is battling Polish Jews to see who owns all that real estate

By Yair Sheleg

About a week ago, Benjamin Mead, president of the Organization of Holocaust Survivors in the United States, appeared at a conference of the Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel. Mead took advantage of the platform to launch a sharp critique against the leadership of the Jewish
community in Poland - a small community, which he claims is trying to take control of property that had belonged to the millions of Polish Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust or to survivors who left Poland afterward.

"Three Jews who are living in Poland today are trying to take advantage of Polish law and view themselves as the exclusive heirs of millions of Jews who lived in Poland before World War II; Jews who built an exemplary culture and community institutions and who were forced to leave community and personal property worth millions of dollars in Poland. The real heirs of this wonderful Judaism are living all over the world today, and they have the burden of commemorating it," Mead said.

Mead's statements were only the tip of the iceberg in a conflict that has barely received any real exposure: the conflict between the Jewish organizations dealing with the restoration to rightful owners of Jewish property in the countries of the Nazi occupation. Chief among the warring organizations are the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and the current leadership of Polish Jewry, a small community of about 1,400 individuals.

The conflict began in 1993, not long after the WJRO was established and began its work. In May of that year, a WJRO delegation traveled to Poland to conduct a preliminary survey of lost Jewish property. (The issue is community property only; the WJRO does not deal with personal Jewish property). As part of the visit, WJRO officials met with Polish Jewish community leaders. "We told them: We are going to negotiate with the Polish government, but we don't want to do it behind your backs. We want to coordinate it with you," one of the heads of the WJRO told Ha'aretz. (The man spoke on condition of anonymity, since according to him the WJRO and the community in Poland are currently in the thick of negotiations to normalize their relationship, and he does not want to draw fire at such a sensitive time.)

"They, coming out of decades of communist dictatorship, looked at us as if we had come from the moon. They agreed that the demand was justified, but were very fearful of the effects of such monetary deliberations on their position in Poland. They feared a severe anti-Semitic response. At the end of the day, in order to free them of these negotiations, they signed an agreement giving us and the World Federation of Polish Jewry power of attorney to negotiate on their behalf as well."

The value of Jewish property in Poland is enormous. According to general estimates, from one-fifth to one-third of all real estate in Poland originally belonged to Jews. The Polish weekly Politika, in an investigative report on the issue about a month ago, reported the value of Jewish property in Poland at about $58 billion. Even if the true amount is much lower, we are clearly talking about huge sums.

No wonder the Polish authorities were upset. They also quickly understood that the local Jewish community was the weakest link in the larger chain of monetary negotiations, both because of its fear of the results of a confrontation on the issue and because it consisted of a small number of individuals who would be unable to justify transferring too large a sum into their hands. That is why the authorities repeatedly claimed that the negotiations should be not with international Jewish organizations but with the local community, which, from its point of view, was the successor of Polish Jewry.
The local community found itself between a rock and a hard place, pressed between the Polish authorities, which demanded that the community take upon itself the role of representing all of historic Polish Jewry, and the WJRO, which demanded that the community entrust it with power of attorney. At the end of the day, the local community could not take the pressure and began to negotiate with the authorities as the exclusive heirs to the property.

Contributing to this situation was a law passed by the Polish parliament in February 1997 (as early as 1994, however, when the bill was first introduced, the Poles had held contacts with the WJRO according to its guidelines), according to which demands for the property of Polish Jews can be made only by representatives of the nine present-day communities in Poland. To remove any doubt, an appendix to the law even spelled out the names of the nine communities.

The WJRO officials, for their part, suspect that the new law is convenient for the local Jewish leadership because it takes the heat off them and gives them the status of exclusive heirs against their will, "by force of law," as it were. Someone in the WJRO even believes that "the law was cooked up together with the Jewish leadership."

In light of the new law, WJRO's demands from Polish Jewry have changed. Now the organization is demanding that the local Jewish leadership set up a joint fund together with the WJRO, so that if a lawsuit can be brought only by the local community, the money from it will eventually reach world Jewry. The Polish community signed an agreement along these lines six months ago, but WJRO officials continue to fear that they are delaying the deliberations on details of the agreement in order to avoid implementing it.

Jerzy Kichler, president of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland, told Ha'aretz, "All of the charges are simply untrue. The Polish parliament is the one that decided that such a suit would be [brought] only by the present community, and we had nothing to do with it.

"On the contrary, the people from the WJRO knew about the draft bill even before it was passed. Why didn't they raise an outcry then? We have shown a willingness to establish a joint fund with the WJRO, and we are not dragging out the deliberations. In September there was a very important meeting on this matter which brought great progress, although the negotiations are not finished."

Meanwhile, the American government has also become involved in the issue. The government, according to a source who is involved in the machinations, fears that the Jewish organizations will wage a protest campaign against Poles in the United States and will thus embarrass the U.S. authorities, which seek to maintain good relations with the Polish authorities. To this end, Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstadt, who heads the American government team dealing with lost Jewish property, appointed a special mediator as liaison between the WJRO and Polish Jewry. The mediator proposed a "geographic division" of Poland, between areas in which only the present-day community will have the right of action, and areas in which the joint fund can initiate legal action. Now the WJRO management must decide whether to accept the proposal.

**Questioning Poles' identity**

Part of the argument between the WJRO and the Jewish community in Poland
goes to the Jewish identity of the members of the community. According to a senior WJRO official, "a large part of those who present themselves as members of the Jewish community are not Jewish at all. Some are not Jewish according to Halacha, because their mothers are not Jewish, and in some cases neither parent is Jewish. Even Kichler [Jerzy Kichler, president of the Union of Jewish Communities in Poland] himself is not Jewish, since his mother is actually German."

Kichler rejects the charges: "It is true that there was a case in the Poznan community, when a few people declared themselves to be the Jewish community, and we found out that they were not Jews at all. And we fought to keep them from being recognized as a Jewish community. In other places we had no such problem."

With regard to his own identity, Kichler says: "It is true that my mother was not Jewish, but that is my own personal matter. Besides, I underwent conversion back in 1980, so no rabbi can invalidate my Judaism." (Yair Sheleg)

Http://www.telegraph.co.uk/et?ac=000140326706927 &rtmo=VM3SJSMK&atmo=VM3SJSMK&pg=/et/99/10/25/wfo125.html

ISSUE 1613 Monday 25 October 1999

Israelis honour Briton who saved 10,000 Jews
By Alan Philps in Jerusalem and Michael Smith

ISRAEL paid tribute yesterday to Capt Frank Foley, one of Britain’s most successful but least known spies, who saved thousands of Jews from the Nazi death camps while at the same time running agents deep into Hitler’s war machine.

Robin Cook praised Foley for defying British policy towards the Jews
Foley, who died in 1958, was recognised as one of the "Righteous Among Nations" - a title given to Gentiles who rescued Jews from the Nazis - at a ceremony at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial.

Among the audience were several German-born Jews saved by the Englishman who used his position at the British embassy in Berlin to issue visas to Palestine in defiance of Whitehall instructions. Some were in tears as the memories of their visit to the British consulate in the late Thirties came flooding back.

Miriam Posner, who was 16 when she travelled from East Prussia to beg for a visa to Palestine, even though she did not meet Britain’s stiff conditions for entry, said: "Foley saved my life. We heard that there was this man Foley who was kind to the Jews. My mother begged him. He just paced up and down a little and then asked for my passport and put the visa stamp on it. He did not ask any questions."

Fr John Kelley, Foley’s nephew, an Anglican priest from Connecticut in America, accepted the award on behalf of his uncle. "I believe that God put Frank Foley in Berlin to do His work. Foley did what he did as a witness to the Christian churches to show what they should have done at that time, but
Foley worked in Berlin in the Thirties as the MI6 station chief, using the cover of a passport officer. Defying the Foreign Office, he bent the rules to issue 10,000 visas for Palestine. Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, who was present at the ceremony, praised Foley for defying British policy towards the Jews.

He said: "He showed the courage to break the rules when the rules were unjust. Faced with rules that would result in many more perishing, he followed his conscience rather than the rules. Amid great darkness, he lit a candle and that candle provided the guidance for many to escape to freedom and security."

Foley has been called the "British Schindler" after Oskar Schindler, who protected and finally rescued his Jewish factory workers. But it has taken 50 years for him to be recognised. When Adolf Eichmann went on trial in 1961, Benno Cohn was one of the witnesses against the architect of the Final Solution. He described the Nazi reign of terror and how few people reached out to help the Jews.

He said: "There was one man who stood out above all others. Capt Foley, a man who in my opinion was one of the greatest among the nations of the world. He rescued thousands of Jews from the jaws of death."

But even that fulsome tribute cannot adequately describe what Foley did. In a letter to the Jerusalem Post, welcoming the decision to make Foley Righteous Among Nations, one of those he saved wrote: "I have five children and 18 grandchildren, none of whom would ever have seen the light of day had I not lived. There must be countless men, women and children today who would never have been born but for Foley. May God bless his memory."

But there has also been a reluctance in Israel to recognise a British government servant. For decades, many Israelis have bitterly resented Britain's policy of putting obstacles in the way of Jews coming to Palestine. Despite the testimony of many people rescued by Foley, there was some disagreement whether he merited the title of "Righteous Among Nations".

Judge Yaacov Maaltz, who heads the commission which awards the title, said several members argued that Foley did not run any great risk by issuing visas, beyond a reprimand from the Foreign Office, or expulsion by the Nazi authorities.

Mr Cook said Foley did not enjoy diplomatic immunity in Berlin and was running a serious risk. "Had he been exposed by the Nazis, he would have suffered a much worse fate than being persona non grata." He paid tribute to Michael Smith, the reporter on The Daily Telegraph who unearthed the story told in his book, Frank Foley: The Spy who Saved 10,000 Jews.

Several of the audience described Foley as "small, bespectacled and nondescript" and were shocked to find that he was not a lowly clerk but a master spy. Ze'ev Padon, whose father was in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp when Foley went to rescue him, said: "He was not a James Bond figure at all." Mrs Posner said: "He was small and quiet. You would never suspect he was a spy."
Hi --

It's a slow assets news day. Here's what we have:

Polish Assets (3)
Wiesenthal on Austria (1)
Swiss Whistleblower Finds Home (1)

As ever, if you see news coverage, don't hesitate to call (202.371.6400 x456), fax (202.371.5678) or email me.

Stu

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues **

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Polish Victims of Holocaust File Intervention Suit
U.S. Newswire
26 Oct 8:00
Polish Victims of the Holocaust File Intervention Suit in $1.25B Settlement Against Swiss Banks
To: Assignment Desk, Daybook Editor
Contact: Polish American Congress, 773-763-9944, or 202-296-6955

News Advisory:

What: Press Conference

When: Wednesday, Oct. 27, 9 a.m.

Where: National Press Club, Edward R. Murrow Room
529 14th St., N.W.
Washington, D.C.

Details:
Polish victims of the Holocaust have served legal papers seeking to enter the class action lawsuits against the Swiss banks and objecting to the terms of the settlement agreement under which the Swiss banks have agreed to pay $1.25 billion to the victims of Nazi Germany. Relatively small numbers of victims in such categories as Jehovah's Witnesses and homosexuals were included in the settlement. Ethnic Poles, 80 percent to 90 percent of them Roman Catholic, were not included, even though they constitute the largest category of victims, next to the Jews.

The purpose of the intervention is to object to the language in the proposed settlement which excludes the ethnic Poles from the class plaintiffs and to participate in the approval and
Jewish property belongs to Jews

The problem of the fate of Jewish property in Poland, which has recently been in the headlines, is more complex than in any other country occupied by the Nazis during the Holocaust.

First of all, before the war, Poland had the second largest Jewish communes and their partners. Second of all, Poland is the only European country where there was a pogrom after the Nazi defeat.

This occurred in the city of Kielce, when a group of Jews returned to the town to reclaim their property. Forty of them were murdered, the rest ran away.

Third, the pogrom proved that the old Polish anti-Semitism had not lost its venom and that there was no future for Jews in that country.

Now the Jewish community there numbers a few thousand. Although it is somewhat of an exaggeration to speak of a “new blossoming” of the Jewish community, as some of its leaders have been suggesting lately, among the young Jews of Poland there are those who are seeking their roots.

Who, therefore, should inherit the vast amount of Jewish property, valued in the tens of millions of dollars?

It is difficult to escape the impression that some of those discovering their Judaism in Poland nowadays, are doing so because of a new Polish law which determines that only nine existing communities can claim the return of property lost during the Holocaust.

The 1997 legislation superseded a previous agreement that had stood between the communities and the World Jewish Organization, giving the organization the authority to negotiate with the Polish government.

Instead, there’s an agreement between the organization and the Jewish community to establish a joint fund which will receive the property that is returned or its equivalent value.

There is no doubt that private property to which there is any heir at all should rightfully be returned to its proper owner and that the public property of the Jewish communities belongs to those communities.

But that, after all, is only a tiny fraction of the hundreds of thousands of homes, synagogues, factories and land that were owned by the Polish Jewish community.
It is not acceptable for the Polish government or its non-Jewish citizens to benefit from the disaster that befell the Jewish people.

It is also unacceptable that the Polish government declares that a few dozen officials and community leaders, over whom it has control, should be the heirs of the 3.5 million Polish victims of the Holocaust.

The property without heirs belongs to the Jewish people and the Jewish state. The reparations agreement between Germany, the State of Israel and world Jewish organizations is the precedent that can serve as a basis for an arrangement for the Jewish property that remains in Poland.

But for that claim to be made of Poland with the appropriate moral authority, two conditions must be fulfilled.

First, both the state and the organizations speaking on behalf of Diaspora Jewry must be more transparent about the property that they recover than they have been in the past.

Secondly, there must be some clear criteria for the use of the money, starting first and foremost with financial help for those elderly, ailing victims of the Holocaust who are living among us in dire poverty.

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The Jerusalem Post

October 24, 1999, Sunday

HEADLINE: Poland parley on wartime Jewish property postponed

BYLINE: Marilyn Henry

BODY:

NEW YORK - Poland has postponed an international conference, scheduled for next month, on the recovery of Jewish property, in part because its government is in the midst of considering controversial legislation that would provide partial compensation for property that was looted by the Nazis.

The postponement of the meeting was a "prudent" decision, a US State Department source said Friday. "We are not distressed."

The Warsaw meeting, which was first announced last December in Washington at an international conference on Holocaust assets, would take place at some unspecified date in the spring, the source said.

The original timing of the conference also was seen as awkward because there is not yet an agreement between Polish Jews and the World Jewish Restitution Organization over a foundation that would control recovered communal property.

A proposal mediated by State Department envoy Henry Clarke is to be considered by Polish Jews next week.

The property legislation, if accepted by the Polish parliament,
would pay only half the value of the assets. That amount is seen as unacceptably low by Holocaust survivors, and too high by many in Poland.

http://www.nando.net/24hour/sacbee/global/story/0,1727,500049773-500081523-500250149-0,00.html

Nazi hunter warns of anti-Semitism in Austria after rightist surge
By ROBERT H. REID

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VIENNA, Austria (October 26, 1999 10:10 a.m. EDT http://www.nandotimes.com) - Veteran Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal warned Tuesday that Jews could be threatened by social tension in Austria stoked by this month's surge in support for a far right-wing political party.

During an interview on Austrian television, Wiesenthal, a Holocaust survivor, referred to the second-place showing in Oct. 3 parliamentary elections by the Freedom Party of Joerg Haider, which prompted concern abroad about its anti-immigrant, far right-wing stance.

Wiesenthal, 90, said that even if Jews were not singled out as a group by name, there are "enough people in Austria who see Jews as foreigners, even if they have already lived here for decades."

Referring to the Nazi campaigns against non-Germanic peoples more than a half century ago, Wiesenthal added: "Our generation ignored it and later paid dearly for that."

Anti-Semitism was not an issue in the election, in which the Freedom Party narrowly outpolled the center-right Austrian Peoples Party, the junior partner in the 13-year governing coalition led by the Social Democrats, who finished first.

Exit polls, however, showed that Haider's party, which won about 27 percent of the vote, drew support from young, working class male voters, who traditionally back the Social Democrats.

Haider has denied harboring anti-Semitic views, although he has praised Waffen SS veterans as "men of character." Nine years ago, he also praised Adolf Hitler's employment policies but later recanted the statement and resigned as a state governor as a result of the comment.

Recently, Haider has sought to portray himself as a democrat who simply reflects the fears of his followers about the influx of foreign workers.

Wiesenthal urged all mainstream Austrian parties to speak out strongly against anti-foreign sentiment.

In a speech Tuesday marking Austria's national day, Chancellor Viktor Klima, the leader of the Social Democratic Party, said the greatest challenge facing a new government will be to "overcome the propaganda against foreigners" living in this country.

Sacramento Bee
Swiss whistle-blower Christoph Meili and his family had never seen their new home, but it already looked like they had lived a lifetime there.

There was furniture in every room, pictures hanging on the walls, chests brimming with toys for the children, food in the refrigerator and dishes set on the table, ready for dinner.

The Meilis' young son was so surprised that he turned to the man giving him a tour and said: "Boy, you have a beautiful house here."

"No, Davide, this is your house," Los Angeles lawyer William Elperin recalls telling the 5-year-old. "He couldn't conceive of that. ... It was just like a model home, ready to move in."

Elperin and his wife had purchased everything the family would need -- from sofas to soup spoons -- with donations from thousands of contributors who wanted to help Meili achieve his dream of a college education at nearby Chapman University.

In the past year, Meili has received some $250,000 in donations and a full, four-year scholarship at Chapman through the efforts of a group of Southern Californians who want to reward what they consider the extraordinary sacrifices of an ordinary man.

Meili was just 27 and working as a security guard when he became a hero to Jews around the world and a pariah in his homeland by saving documents from the shredder that showed Swiss banks had secretly held assets belonging to Holocaust victims.

His January 1997 discovery triggered an international debate about Switzerland's claims to neutrality during World War II and helped more than 15,000 Jews win a $1.25 billion settlement of their Holocaust-era claims from Swiss banks.

The bank fired Meili, Swiss prosecutors threatened to file theft
charges, and
death threats arrived in the mail and over the phone.

Four months after smuggling the records out of the Union Bank of
Switzerland's shredding room, the unassuming security guard and his
family fled
their homeland in fear for their lives.

"I was really amazed," Elperin said. "Here is someone who wasn't
Jewish and
took it on himself to do what he did, knowing there would be
consequences. Yet
he went ahead, because he knew it was the right thing to do."

Jewish groups welcomed the Meili family to the United States and
helped them
win political asylum. But Meili spoke little English and wound up in a
dead-end
job as a hotel doorman in New Jersey.

A Jewish activist provided the family with a two-bedroom apartment,
and Meili
supplemented his salary with speaking engagements. At one of those
speeches,
Meili so impressed two Southern Californians that they became his
champions and
chief benefactors.

They didn’t know one another, and they didn’t speak to each other at
the
Whittier Law School conference in the spring of 1998.

But Elperin, president of one of the nation's largest Holocaust
survivor
groups, and Marilyn Harran, a Chapman University religion and history
professor,
both were struck by Meili's decision to suffer the consequences of
making the
Swiss bank’s documents public.

Harran, who founded a Holocaust studies program at Chapman, said she
asks
students what choice they would have made in Nazi Germany: Support
Adolf Hitler
or face the loss of their livelihoods or worse? She saw Meili as having
faced a
similar decision and making the right choice.

Harran isn’t Jewish, and Chapman is affiliated with the Disciples of
Christ
Church. But she said Meili represented the college’s teachings, so she
asked the
university’s president, James L. Doti, to offer him a four-year
scholarship.

"At Chapman, we try to say one person really can make a difference,"
Harran
said. "It really came together in my mind that this was somebody who
represented
the kind of action I talk about with my students."

The university’s president agreed and began making calls to offer
Meili a
scholarship.

Elperin, meanwhile, had invited Meili to Los Angeles to be honored by
"1939" Club, where he serves as president.

The group of Polish Holocaust survivors and their children, which is named for the year Germany invaded Poland, held a boisterous celebration for Meili in June 1998.

During a breakfast meeting the next day, Elperin asked Meili what he wanted to do. Meili said he wanted to attend college but didn’t have a clue about how to do it.

Elperin, the 52-year-old son of a Holocaust survivor, offered to help. He turned to The "1939" Club first, and its members pledged $50,000 to support the Meili family.

"There’s not very many people who will put themselves on the line and stand up for Jews," Elperin said. "Here was someone who did and suffered consequences for it. We felt it was important to help because it was the right thing to do and it would show the world community that Jews . . . will support those who support them."

Through personal appeals, ads in Jewish journals and publicity about Meili, Elperin raised another $200,000 to cover the family’s living expenses for five years.

"I had never done this before," he said. "It’s amazing. It was a grass-roots effort, and it just snowballed."

His help went well beyond fund raising. In between meetings with clients in his busy law practice, Elperin also found three colleges willing to give Meili a scholarship.

Then Chapman University’s president tracked Meili down with his own scholarship offer, and he chose the small college in the suburban community of Orange. This fall, at age 31, the former bank guard began his freshman year and his new life at Chapman.

He doesn’t know for certain what major he’ll pursue. But he said he’s very grateful to Chapman and The "1939" Club for giving him a "future."

"In a way, they have done what I did," Meili said. "They are standing out from the crowd, taking a risk on me."

Amid the turmoil of the last two years, he said his new friends in Southern California have become his "anchors" and helped him leave behind the pain of the past.
"In my experience the best thing is to look forward, not to persist in your troubles. Move on," Meili said. "That's what Chapman and The '1939' Club are helping me to do . . . Someday I'll be able to give back to others the attitude that they have given to me. And that's wonderful."

GRAPHIC: Special to The Bee

William Elperin, who raised the money that allowed Christoph Meili to begin his new life, stands behind the Swiss whistle-blower and his family at the house Elperin found for them in Orange.
October 26, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON NAMES JAMES D. BINDENAGEL FOR RANK OF AMBASSADOR AS SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HOLOCAUST ISSUES

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release October 26, 1999

PRESIDENT CLINTON NAMES JAMES D. BINDENAGEL FOR RANK OF AMBASSADOR AS SPECIAL ENVOY FOR HOLOCAUST ISSUES

The President today announced his intent to nominate James D. (J.D.) Bindenagel for Rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues.

Mr. James Bindenagel, of California and a native of South Dakota, is a career Foreign Service Officer. He was Director of the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets, hosted by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in November-December, 1998. Mr. Bindenagel has served twenty-four years in the Foreign Service, including fourteen years in Europe. He was last assigned to Bonn, Germany, where he was Charge D'Affairs and Deputy Chief of Mission from 1994-1997.

Mr. Bindenagel was educated at the University of South Dakota and University of Illinois. He received his bachelors and master's degrees from the University of Illinois. Mr. Bindenagel served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Third Infantry Division in Germany, 1971-74. He speaks fluent German.

-30-30-30-
During World War II, German industry earned billions of dollars by brutally exploiting millions of slave and forced laborers leased from the Nazis. These concentration camp inmates and civilians abducted from occupied lands have never been compensated for their labor or suffering.

Finally, after 55 years of inaction, on October 6, Germany and its leading industries made a disgraceful offer. Their $3.3 billion offer to the hundreds of thousands alive today is an insult. For most, this amounts to pennies an hour.

Germany and its industrial giants can readily provide meaningful and just compensation to these victims. Daimler-Benz bought Chrysler last year for almost $40 billion. Deutsche Bank bought Bankers Trust for over $8 billion. Volkswagen has awarded $2 billion in academic grants.

Germany is the world's third most powerful economy. In 1998, it rang up a record $1.8 trillion in economic output. Germany spent over $600 billion in the last decade to re-integrate East Germany. Over $12 billion just to move its capital to Berlin.

In contrast to Germany's paltry offer to its slave laborers, the German government continues to generously pay its World War II veterans. $250 billion to date. $7.7 billion annually.

Even German war criminals, some of whom are still in prison, continue to receive monthly pensions.

Yet Germany and the German companies, the heirs to this massive crime, tell us that they "dug deep" to come up with this disgraceful offer—that pennies an hour is "justified and dignified."

DaimlerChrysler. BASF. BMW. ThyssenKrupp. Hoechst. Siemens. Volkswagen. These industrial giants built their empires on the backs of hundreds of thousands of slave and forced laborers. BMW alone had 12,000—60% of its total wartime workforce. Daimler-Benz had over 100,000. 67% of Volkswagen's wartime staff were slaves. At Krupp, nearly 80% of its 100,000 slaves died as a result of Krupp's inhuman treatment. At Auschwitz, one factory alone had 83,000 slave laborers as part of the Nazi's "extermination through labor" program.

Negotiations will resume soon. No amount of money can relieve the immeasurable suffering of the survivors of mankind's darkest hours. The victims can no longer wait. Germany has the financial ability to make meaningful payments. Does Germany also have the ability to meet the moral challenge?

The world is watching.
Good morning, all --

Another quick and early - more assets news may break later:

Clinton Names JD Bindenagel to Rank of Ambassador (2 articles)
Military Anti-Semitism Exhibit at West Point (1)
A Pocket of Good in France (1)

Congratulations to JD from all of the Commission's staff...

Stu

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues **

http://www.whitehouse.gov/library/PressReleases.cgi?date=O&briefing=2

also at http://www.usia.gov/cgi-bin/washfile/display.pl?
p=/products/washfile/latest&t=99102602.tlt&t=/products/washfile/newsitem.shtml

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Deutsche Presse-Agentur

October 26, 1999, Tuesday, BC Cycle
20:28 Central European Time

SECTION: International News

LENGTH: 84 words

HEADLINE: Holocaust special envoy named by Clinton

DATELINE: Washington

BODY:

James Bindenagel, a career Foreign Service officer, was Tuesday named special envoy for Holocaust issues.

Bindenagel was director of the Washington conference on Holocaust Era assets in December. He most recently served as deputy chief of mission for the U.S. embassy in Germany.

As special envoy, with rank of ambassador, Bindenagel will deal with such issues as recovering looted assets, insurance for Holocaust victims' survivors and compensation for slave and forced labourers. dpa ja ps

http://jta.virtualjerusalem.com/index.exe?9910258

West Point uses Dreyfus exhibit to illustrate military anti-Semitism
By Jeannine Mercer

NEW YORK, Oct 25 (JTA) - The West Point Military Academy trains some of America's brightest aspiring military officers, yet the institution admits the officers are only prepped briefly about anti-Semitism.

The campus is currently hosting an exhibit on the Dreyfus Affair, showcasing historic documents on the turn-of-the-century case that reflected anti-Semitic attitudes in the French military.
The exhibit adds to the cadets' exposure to Judaism and the lessons of tolerance - but one West Point educator believes more should be done.

"Anti-Semitism is an issue that comes up often in the military, and the cadets need to be better prepared about it to serve on duty," said Col. Lee Wyatt, deputy head of West Point Military Academy's history department.

In 1894 Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish captain in the French army, was falsely convicted of treason, publicly degraded and sent to Devil's Island, a penal colony in South America. He had been accused by his military colleagues of passing on secrets to Germany - and his trial brought out bitter anti-Semitism within the French army ranks. However, after 12 years of investigation, Dreyfus was exonerated and reinstated to the army.

Wyatt, who said he wants to use the Dreyfus exhibit at West Point to help combat negative Jewish stereotypes among enlisted soldiers in the military, hopes its cadets can become role models for religious tolerance.

The only required course at West Point that touches briefly on these issues is a World and American History class taught on the freshman level. The students learn about U.S. immigration policy and restrictions against Jewish refugees who fled from anti-Semitism abroad. Unless cadets opt to take an elective seminar course on the Holocaust in their senior year, that is all the relevant instruction they receive.

William Cohen, U.S. secretary of defense, wrote a letter to the exhibit's organizers stating that moral judgment, ethical integrity and ethnic tolerance are "essential to the young men and women who will become our commissioned leaders of character."

Since the early 1970s, the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and other hate groups have been recruiting military personnel, according to the Anti-Defamation League. The Defense Department cannot prohibit enlisted soldiers from joining these organizations, but they can and have discharged those who are actively involved in racist group activities.

"We're hoping that the Dreyfus exhibit will stimulate discussion amongst the cadets, and generate ideas about how the military should deal with racist issues," Wyatt says.

However, it is not clear how many cadets will see the exhibit. Located in the academy's Eisenhower Hall, a corridor adjacent to the campus theater, the general public and student theatergoers will be its main audience. But the exhibit was highly publicized in the student press, and Wyatt believes that cadets studying French and history will also take the opportunity to view it.

Cadets also have other opportunities to broaden their knowledge of anti-Semitism. Lorraine Beitler, co-sponsor of the Dreyfus exhibit and the collection's owner, finances a summer journey to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington for interested cadets.

In addition, Beitler discusses issues of Jewish concern with Wyatt, who teaches the elective Holocaust seminar. As part of the seminar, Beitler brings a small group of disabled Israeli war veterans every May to West Point.

"Beitler's contribution gives the cadets a baseline for a better understanding" of Judaism, Wyatt says. "Hopefully, it should better prepare
In France, a Pocket of Good in the Evil of the Holocaust

By ALAN RIDING

LE CHAMBON-SUR-LIGNON, France -- The petite gray-haired woman in her 60's happened to be walking past a plaque commemorating the triumph of good over evil, but she needed no prompting to recall what happened here more than half a century ago.

"The Gestapo came looking for Jews," she said. "They came with three buses, and the buses left empty. We told them there were no Jews here."

Robert Daley, the American writer best known for his police thrillers, listened intently, but he already knew the story. He includes a similar scene in his new novel, "The Innocents Within" (Villard Books). Indeed, the entire book is inspired by events in and around this small town in Massif Central from 1940 to 1944, when local Protestants shielded thousands of Jews from arrest and deportation.

"Everyone participated," the woman said, waving away an invitation to give her name. "Everyone agreed they had a moral obligation to help.

The Protestant pastors, about a dozen of them, played a very important role. They had a network. They used a code. They'd call each other up and say, 'I'm sending you three Old Testaments.'"

And yet the story of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon is relatively unknown in France. For a long time after World War II, with paens to the Resistance in vogue, little recognition was given to those French who helped 250,000 Jews survive the occupation, perhaps because to do so would draw attention to those other French who were involved in deporting 76,000 Jews to death camps. In fact, the first book about Le Chambon, "Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed" (Harper Perennial, 1989), was written by an American, Philip P. Hallie.

Now with the end of the cold war reawakening interest in the horrors of the Nazi era, the sins of France's collaborationist Vichy Government and the courage of righteous French citizens are being revisited. One recent book, "Your Name Is Renée" (Oxford University Press), by Stacy Cretzmeyer, recounts how Ruth Kapp Hartz, a young Jewish girl in occupied France, was hidden by a French family and later in a Roman Catholic orphanage. When Daley discovered the story of Le Chambon, he felt moved to retell it as fiction.

"I was researching a different book in the library of Fordham University when I found references to Le Chambon and its pastor, André Trocmé," said
Daley, the author of such best sellers as "Prince of the City," "Year of the Dragon" and "Nowhere to Run." "I first thought of making Trocmé a Roman Catholic, but then I thought it better to have a Protestant in a Roman Catholic country."

His interest in France was not accidental. Now 69, the tall, slim New Yorker first came here as an aspiring writer in 1954, arriving in Nice, where he promptly met the young Frenchwoman who became his wife, Peggy Ernest. Soon fluent in French, he worked for The New York Times as a foreign correspondent in the Paris bureau in the early 1960's. He later made his name in New York with thrillers spinning out of a brief spell as Deputy Police Commissioner of New York City in 1971, but he never lost touch with France, where he has long kept a second home.

In November 1996, having researched the broad picture of the occupation, Daley turned to Le Chambon. He read "Lest Innocent Blood Be Shed," and he also spent a week here getting a feel for the town and its surrounding hamlets and hearing for himself what happened during the dark days of war. He then went away to write a novel about a young American airman who crash-lands near here and is hidden in the Protestant presbytery, where he falls in love with a young Jewish woman who is living there under a Christian name.

To give himself leeway, Daley turned Le Chambon-sur-Lignon into Le Lignon, while Trocmé became André Favert; his wife, Magda, became Norma, and a few other real characters, including a talented Jewish document forger, were given different names. But the background to the novel, including both failed and successful Gestapo searches for Jews and Trocmé's arrest, mysterious release and subsequent flight, is factual.

"I thought it important to be faithful to the spirit of what happened," Daley said.

Now, having taken reality and turned it into a novel, he had returned to Le Chambon at the suggestion of a reporter for the first time since completing "The Innocents Within." No one here was aware of the book, which has not been translated into French, while Daley himself seemed reluctant to announce himself as the author of a fictionalized version of the town's proud history. In truth, in Le Chambon, the novel seemed more real than ever.

Daley went first to the wall opposite the town's Protestant church where a bronze plaque dated 1979 reads: "To the Protestant community of this Cévenole region, and to all those who followed its example, believers of all faiths and nonbelievers who, during the 1939-1945 war, under the occupation, stood up against the Nazi crimes and at the risk of their own lives hid, protected, saved by the thousands those who were persecuted." It is signed by "The Jewish refugees of Le Chambon and neighboring communes."

The early 19th-century church, dominated by the wooden pulpit where both Trocmé and the novel's Favert preached to the faithful about their duty to hide Jews from persecution, seems to have changed little in decades. "The church was again full to overflowing, and the pastor mounted to the pulpit and looked over the congregation," Daley wrote in his novel after attending religious services here in 1996. Behind the church lies the cemetery where the grave of Trocmé (he died in 1971), his wife and various relatives is marked by a tombstone bereft of grandiloquence.

The town's railroad station, where Jewish fugitives carrying old suitcases
arrived, is closed. But the rusty tracks of the narrow-gauge steam engine that once linked Le Chambon to Le Puy still wind through nearby woods. At one point the tracks pass the House of the Rocks, a stone mansion that was a hostel for some 30 Jewish children until they were rounded up and deported by the Gestapo in 1943.

In Daley's book and in reality, the hostel was run by the pastor’s cousin, who was also taken away by the Germans. The house, which is for sale, carries no plaque recalling the tragedy of that day when, Daley wrote, the pastor "recognized his failure and wept." Yet the past has not been forgotten. Beside a bouquet of dried flowers, a faded ribbon attached to an outside fence reads: "29 June 1943, To my companions, never forgotten. Antonio Plaza." Plaza, a young Spanish refugee, was the only boy in the hostel who escaped deportation that day.

Daley's central love story between Davey Gannon and Rachel Weiss is, of course, fictional, but he said it too could have happened: the raid in which Gannon is shot down did take place, and a young Jewish girl was hidden in one of the presbyteries of the area. There is even a touch of autobiography in Gannon, Daley admitted. Having served in the United States Air Force in the early 1950's, the experience helped him create the character of the love-struck young airman.

That said, he insisted that he approached his story as fiction. "With nonfiction writing, you're trying to organize something you’ve seen or heard so that it strikes the reader the same way it strikes you," he said. "When writing a novel, the author should stay out of it. Each day you wake up and put yourself in a trance, and the characters start speaking in ways you don’t expect."

Yet, as with his police thrillers, this story’s success depends on its being credible. And in that sense, "The Innocents Within" inevitably blurs the line between fable and fact: it is the characters who drive the plot, but it is history that makes them real.

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues **
Good morning,

Today’s assets news:

Leon Wieseltier on the Gold Train Progress Report and Assets in General* (1)
JD Bindenagel (1 article)
WJC - Vatican to Slow Beautification (2)
California Treasurer Pushes for Settlement (1)
Michigan Assets Taxability (1)

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* Please recall that the picture of wedding rings on the front page of the New York Times that accompanied their coverage of the Gold Train progress report was not provided by the Commission in any way, shape, or form. We do not believe that those rings came from the Gold Train and, of course, that picture is very familiar from other Holocaust-related contexts.

**Visit the Commission’s website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues **

The New Republic

NOVEMBER 8, 1999

SECTION: Pg. 98

HEADLINE: Assets

BYLINE: Leon Wieseltier (Copyright 1999, The New Republic)

HIGHLIGHT:
Washington Diarist

BODY:

"Spit at it," I told my mother. She was taken aback by the intemperateness of my advice, but she concurred in my analysis. I was referring to an application that she received last year from the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa. It asked that she sign on the line beneath two statements--"I declare that I am a Holocaust survivor in need" and "I further declare that I am
Jewish and lived in a country at the time that it was under the Nazi regime, under Nazi occupation or under the regime of Nazi collaborators and that I am a citizen, permanent resident or other legal resident of the United States"—and thereby make herself eligible to receive "a humanitarian support." What had startled her was the magnitude of the support with which the Swiss were proposing to "honor" her suffering. The accompanying letter described it as "not only a gesture, but also a meaningful assistance," and concluded that survivors who are not "in need" should not apply, for "if other survivors apply, no more than 300 Dollars could be paid out to each eligible applicant. May God forbid that anything like the Shoa repeats." Three hundred dollars! It is not a lot to pay for a clean conscience, especially at Swiss prices; but my mother was not prepared to auction the absolution sought at any price. This was not charity, this was contempt.

Last week I was reminded of my mother's moral poise by a photograph that appeared on the front page of The New York Times. It showed two anonymous hands rummaging through a crate of wedding bands. The men and the women who had worn these sanctifying rings were Hungarian Jews who had been slaughtered by the Nazis. According to a report by the Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States, it appears that this Nazi plunder was itself plundered by American soldiers, who intercepted a Nazi gold train in May 1945. "We want to establish the principle that the United States is willing to hold itself to the same high standard to which it has held others," the admirable Stuart Eizenstat diplomatically remarked, though in the matter of ethical behavior in Europe in the 1940s there is almost not a European country that can cast a stone at the United States, the avarice of a certain General Harry J. Collins notwithstanding. I pondered the image of those wedding bands and all I saw was the emptiness that they described, thousands and thousands of little circles of death and little circumferences of nothingness, and I thought that I am sick of hearing about the fate of gold. Holocaust assets!

I am sick of hearing about those Schiele paintings, too. A few months ago I was unpacking my library and I came upon a book that once I treasured, but not
I had heard about this book for years, and when I found a copy in Cambridge 20 years ago I gladly paid more than a student could afford for it. The book is called Lost Treasures of Europe. It was published by Pantheon in 1946. It is a volume of photographs, 427 photographs, of the artistic monuments that were destroyed during the war in Europe. It is a crushing book: the Mantegna frescoes in Padua, the Ponte Santa Trinita in Florence, the medieval buildings in Rouen and Tournai, hundreds of pages illustrating destruction that deserves to plunge every civilized individual into mourning. But, as I say, I cannot look at this book anymore. The catastrophe that it documents seems less catastrophic to me; and I mistrust its religion of culture. When the editor writes that he was deeply moved when an audience in Vienna in 1946 "broke into sustained applause" at the news that the U.S. Army had recovered the crown jewels and the coronation regalia of the Holy Roman Empire, and that "the loss or destruction of these prized heritages of the past becomes in fact a personal loss comparable to that of a friend," his humanism is lost on me. The proper objects of humanism are humans.

in the discussion of the holocaust now, the authority of the philosophers and the historians is being usurped by the authority of the lawyers and the museum directors; and the subject, more and more, is money. I read about class-action suits against banks that stole Jewish deposits and insurance companies that stole Jewish policies and industrial corporations that employed Jewish slave labor, and I agree that there will be no justice in letting the "neutrals" and the opportunists and the collaborators get away with it; but there will be no justice also in not letting them get away with it. Whatever happens, in the matter of what transpired in Europe between 1933 and 1945 there will be no justice. There is no class action that is possible for this class. The fate of those wedding bands is as nothing compared to the fate of those husbands and those wives. I do not worry about anti-Semitism, in this regard; the Jews are not the only victims in the world who want their property back. I worry that the Jews are tiring of their history, tiring of what they know. The emergence of the new reparations industry represents the strange and sapping illusion that certain elements of Jewish destiny in the blood-field of Europe may be
reversed.
I understand that the money that is the object of all this litigation is "our" money, but what has litigation to do with sorrow? I really cannot bring myself to care about where the Monets of the martyrs will hang. I would rather grieve than sue. It seems more lucid.

Perhaps money is swamping tragedy now because money is swamping everything now. It is a decade since the fall of the Berlin Wall. I remember telling a Polish friend, a few months after the wall fell, that dialectical materialism was about to be replaced by undialectical materialism. It was a fine joke, except that it is no longer funny. It is our good fortune, certainly, that history no longer places any limitations on the appetites of the West; but this means only that we must look for those limitations elsewhere. The discipline that we impose on ourselves will no longer be necessary for our physical survival, but it will be necessary for our philosophical survival. Still, I won't kid myself. The New York Times Magazine, where a font is an idea, won't let me kid myself. We are fat and we are acting fat. In the fifth of its stupefyingly silly "millennium issues," the magazine extols "the self at the center of the universe" (did you know that a thousand years ago there were no individuals, because "the self was subordinated to church and king," whereas now "many of us have a personal identity or a reasonable expectation of acquiring one"); and in a gallery of "archetypal personalities, then and now," it lists Faust with Lassie; and in a thoroughly counterfeit lament about conformity by Luc Sante, it instructs that right now, everything is for sale, including you, and if you are not saleable, you will starve. So you tailor and trim and adapt yourself, sand down your edges, maximize your appeal as if there isn't anybody who behaves differently. A nonconformist, I guess, is a conformist who writes a piece about nonconformity; and there are no heroes in the niches. Still, a little nausea would go a long way.

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M2 PRESSWIRE

October 27, 1999

LENGTH: 164 words
The President today announced his intent to nominate James D. (J.D.) Bindenagel for Rank of Ambassador during his tenure of service as Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues.

Mr. James Bindenagel, of California and a native of South Dakota, is a career Foreign Service Officer. He was Director of the Washington Conference on Holocaust Era Assets, hosted by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in November-December, 1998. Mr. Bindenagel has served twenty-four years in the Foreign Service, including fourteen years in Europe. He was last assigned to Bonn, Germany, where he was Charge D’Affairs and Deputy Chief of Mission from 1994-1997.

Mr. Bindenagel was educated at the University of South Dakota and University of Illinois. He received his bachelors and master’s degrees from the University of Illinois. Mr. Bindenagel served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Army Third Infantry Division in Germany, 1971-74. He speaks fluent German.


JEWISH LEADER: VATICAN TO SLOW BEATIFICATION OF PIUS XII

NEW YORK (CWNews.com) - An official of a major Jewish group said on Tuesday that he had been informed that the Vatican had decided to slow down the process of beatification for Pope Pius XII.

Elan Steinberg, director of the World Jewish Congress, that Jewish leaders were told by Vatican officials at a meeting last week that the cause for Pius XII would be slowed and that of his successor, John XXIII, would be actively pursued. "The effect will be that during the millennium year we will likely see the beatification of John XXIII instead of Pius XII," he added.

Some Jewish leaders have been critical of Pope Pius XII for his World War II role in combatting the Holocaust. While many Jews, including the wartime rabbi of Rome and Israeli consul-general in Italy, have praised the pope for saving hundreds of thousands of Jews from the Nazis, some observers in recent years have made various claims he failed to do enough. A recent book claims he was a longtime Germanophile and hinted that the pope may have turned a blind eye to the Nazi actions.

The Vatican meetings were held last week to discuss the formation of a
joint Catholic-Jewish committee to re-examine the records from World War II made public by the Vatican.

Pope John XXIII was pope from 1958-63 and was the impetus behind the Second Vatican Council. He has been praised by Jewish leaders for his work during the war as apostolic nuncio to Turkey in saving Jews there from the Nazis.

Steinberg said that he was told the process of beatification for Pius XII would not be halted. "We do not expect an official Vatican announcement about this. However, the development would be a wonderful gesture to the Jewish world because, by all accounts, John XXIII was a compassionate, caring and sensitive individual -- the very definition of saintliness," he said.

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http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/nm/19991027/ts/holocaust_vatican_2.html

Wednesday October 27 12:21 AM ET

Vatican Slows Beatification For Pius XII - Group

NEW YORK (Reuters) - The Roman Catholic Church has decided to slow down the process toward sainthood for Pope Pius XII -- who is under new controversy for his wartime role -- while moving actively toward making a saint of his successor, Pope John XXIII, a senior Jewish official said Tuesday.

World Jewish Congress Executive Director Elan Steinberg said that Vatican officials informed Jewish leaders of that in private meetings last week at the Vatican.

"The effect will be that during the millennium year we will likely see the beatification of John XXIII instead of Pius XII," he added.

Beatification is the penultimate step leading to sainthood in the Catholic Church.

The meetings were called at the Vatican to discuss the formation of a joint Catholic-Jewish committee to review the Holy See's World War II archives.

Many Jewish groups have criticised Pius XII for staying publicly silent during World War II about Nazi atrocities. The church, however, has strongly defended the wartime pope and credited him with saving hundreds of thousands of Jewish lives with behind-the-scenes efforts.

John XXIII, who was pope from 1958-63, has been praised by Jewish leaders for his wartime work in saving Jews when he was apostolic delegate to Turkey. Jewish leaders have also praised him for convening the Second Vatican Council, which formally removed from church doctrine that Jews were collectively responsible for the death of Christ.

Steinberg said there was no commitment by the Vatican to cancel the process of beatification for Pius XII, which, like that for John XXIII, has been going on for several years.

"We do not expect an official Vatican announcement about this. However, the development would be a wonderful gesture to the Jewish world because, by all accounts, John XXIII was a compassionate, caring and sensitive individual -- the very definition of saintliness."
A new book by the British Catholic scholar John Cornwell, "Hitler's Pope: The Secret History of Pius XII," accused the pope of being indifferent to the fate of the Jews during World War II and to harboring anti-Semitic sentiments before the war. Pius XII was pontiff from 1939-58.


Wednesday October 27, 11:47 pm Eastern Time

Calif. treasurer presses for Holocaust settlement

SACRAMENTO, Calif., Oct 27 (Reuters) - California's treasurer on Wednesday pressed companies doing business with the state to finish negotiations on the Holocaust restitution claims of Nazi-era slaves and forced laborers by the end of the year, a possible prelude to sanctions.

Treasurer Phil Angelides sent a letter to eight German and American firms involved in the next round of talks set to take place in Bonn next month over the Holocaust-era claims.

"I wanted to go on record with the companies letting them know how important we believe this matter is and what a premium we put on a rapid conclusion," Angelides said in a telephone interview.

"My hope and expectation is that it will be done by the 31st of December; and if it's not, then clearly we haven't just written these letters as idle actions."

The companies could not immediately be reached for comment.

In letters to Bayerische Hypo-Und Vereinsbank, Commerzbank AG, Deutsche Bank AG, Bankers Trust, Dresdner Bank AG, DaimlerChrysler AG, Ford Motor Co. and General Motors Corp., Angelides also warned the potential lawsuits that could result from a lack of a settlement put California's financial interests at risk.

The state's Pooled Money Investment Account, headed by the treasurer, has nearly $4 billion invested with those companies potentially affected by the current negotiations.

Angelides is also urging two of the state's public pension funds to take similar action with regard to the billions they have invested in companies involved in the negotiations.

Angelides would not say specifically what he would do if no settlement was reached by the end of the year. But he noted the example of former treasurer Matt Fong, who stopped doing business with Swiss banks in 1997 over their refusal to release lists of account holders of Holocaust-era victims as negotiations slowed down.

"Clearly if negotiations break down or if these negotiations are not completed by the end of the year then we will then have available to us a variety of options," Angelides said.

German firms and their government earlier in October offered six billion marks ($3.3 billion) to compensate the hundreds of thousands of surviving
Nazi-era slaves and forced laborers.

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

October 27, 1999, Wednesday, BC cycle

SECTION: State and Regional

LENGTH: 410 words

HEADLINE: Bills on genetic privacy, Holocaust reparations clear Senate

DATELINE: LANSING, Mich.

BODY:

In other action Wednesday, the Senate passed, 37-0, and returned to the House a bill which provides that Holocaust victims will not have to pay state income tax on reparations, returned assets or settlements of class-action lawsuits.

Rep. Marc Shulman, R-West Bloomfield and sponsor of the bill, has said he expects about 2,500 survivors and benefactors would be eligible for the deduction.

The bill would apply to assets owned by Holocaust victims from 1920 to 1945 which were not returned to them or otherwise reimbursed before January 1994. Interest also can be deducted.

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The genetic privacy bills are Senate Bills 589-91, 593-95, 807 and 815; the Holocaust bill is House Bill 4796.

LANGUAGE: ENGLISH

LOAD-DATE: October 27, 1999

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues **
The JTA website is finally working again. I apologize for the multiple mailings.

http://jta.virtualjerusalem.com/index.exe?9910271

AROUND THE JEWISH WORLD
Russia to inventory looted artwork that the Nazis stole from the Jews
By Douglas Davis

LONDON, Oct. 27 (JTA) - Gerta Silberberg has come one step closer to regaining artworks that the Nazis looted from her family.

The 85-year-old British widow lives modestly in northern England, but is the sole heir to an art fortune that remains scattered around the world.

She welcomed word that Russia has agreed to take steps that may lead to the return of at least one painting that belongs to her - a Cezanne currently housed in Russia's Hermitage Museum - and perhaps the return of several more.

Just the same, she acknowledges that any dealings with the Russian authorities "can be a long and complicated business."

"We will have to see what happens next," she said. "For a long time, the Russians were very unhelpful. We will now have to see how nice they are prepared to be."

A team of lawyers and art historians have identified other paintings from the Silberberg collection in Israel, Britain, Germany and the United States.

Russian officials earlier this month told the chairman of the London-based Holocaust Educational Trust, Lord Janner, that they are prepared to begin making an inventory of artworks looted during World War II.

This is a crucial first step toward restoring the works to their legitimate owners.

The Red Army looted an estimated 130,000 artworks in Germany at the end of the war and shipped them back to Moscow in 1946.

Many of the artworks were returned to East Germany in 1958, but Moscow has always resisted demands to return others, which it regarded as "reparations."

As recently as July the constitutional court upheld a decision by the Russian Parliament to block the return of any artworks that once belonged to the German government.

The inventory they are now willing to undertake has only to do with works the Nazis looted from individuals.
However, many of the paintings removed by the Russians were not the property of the German government but had, in fact, been stolen by the Nazis from Jewish collections.

According to investigators, hundreds of these works may still be in the vaults of Russia's great museums - the Hermitage in St. Petersburg and the Pushkin in Moscow. Several Silberberg pieces, apart from the Cezanne, might be among items that have been in storage for more than 50 years.

The Russians are also now known to have dozens of SS documents that detail the real owners of paintings removed from Berlin at the end of the war.

Moscow's change of heart follows intense lobbying by Jewish groups, particularly the Holocaust Educational Trust, which brokered the deal.

Janner said he was delighted "that we have managed to secure this breakthrough."

"I think there can be no doubt that the Russians have valuable clues to the whereabouts of some of the paintings that have gone missing."

It now remains to be seen whether the "long and complicated business" Silberberg mentioned will result in the artworks' return to their rightful owners.

Silberberg and her husband, Alfred, arrived in Britain as destitute refugees from Nazi Germany in 1937.

Unable to leave was Alfred's father, Max, who had been stripped of all his assets and forced to sell his entire 143-piece art collection - currently valued at some $35 million - for a pittance at a series of four "Jew Auctions" in 1935.

Max Silberberg later died in a concentration camp.

Ten years ago, the German government acknowledged that artworks sold at these "Jew Auctions" were looted property.

Last month, German art authorities delivered a Van Gogh sketch, which had been displayed at Berlin's National Gallery and is valued at some $3 million, to Gerta, heir to the Silberberg fortune since Alfred died in 1984.

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues**
Report Bolstering Claims Against Germany

FOREWARD STAFF

NEW YORK — An unreleased report on the World War II-era profits of Germany's top two banks is bolstering the claim by class-action lawyers that $3.8 billion barely begins to compensate for profits made from forced and slave laborers and from the confiscation of Jewish assets, a process known as "Aryanization."

"German industry has to reconsider its offer and put more money into the foundation. They should be ashamed to offer such a small amount," said Michael Hepp, who wrote the report for the Foundation for Social History of the 20th Century, which specializes in German industry and the Aryanization of assets.

Settlement negotiations broke off during August meetings in Berlin, because the number being floated by the lawyers — $30 billion — and the number being floated by the German companies — $1.7 billion — were irreconcilable. Negotiations resumed in Washington in early October, when German industry raised its offer to $3.8 billion. German companies are seeking protection from further legal claims in exchange for a settlement.

Mr. Hepp, 50, is a journalist who has been writing about Holocaust-related issues since the 1980s. In a phone interview from Germany, Mr. Hepp told the Forward that one reason the offer from the German foundation initiative is inadequate is that the fund seeks to compensate more than just slave laborers and forced laborers — it also seeks to settle the Aryanization claims. Mr. Hepp said that his findings show that during World War II, Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank made 290 million Reichsmarks, which is now worth $1 billion deutsche marks; and $1 billion, on fees resulting from Aryanization in Germany. German banks profited further from confiscating property in the European nations that it invaded, he said. Mr. Hepp, who has also been interviewed by Swiss newspapers, said that the amount of the German offer is "not good for the image of Germany in the rest of the world."

"Four billion marks is nothing for them," Mr. Hepp said. He said that a second, more comprehensive report on the wartime profits of German industry is forthcoming.

The spokesman for the German foundation initiative, Wolfgang Gibowski, said that "the research isn't done properly." He pointed to Mr. Hepp's method of computing Reichsmarks to deutsche marks, saying that it "makes no sense." Mr. Gibowski also said that the $3.8 billion offer is a "final offer." "We don't intend to change it," he said. "We look at this offer in a foundation as a moral obligation. There is no legal obligation," Mr. Gibowski said. In September, federal judges dismissed slave-labor claims pending in court, saying that the American court system was an improper place to deal with settling the claims.

A class-action lawyer negotiating with German industry, Edward Fagan, whose team of lawyers commissioned Mr. Hepp's report, said that the report put into "very specific detail" the work in which German banks profited from Aryanization. "The report shows that, fine, they have responsibility for collusion in slave labor, but they also have liabilities for what they did as banks."
Court Tackles Kosher Standards

By: Stewart Ain, Staff Writer

In discrimination case brought by Long Island butcher, judge gets quick kashrut education.

The pluralism wars that have proved so polarizing in Israel are being played out in another arena locally — a Brooklyn federal courtroom. Attorneys for the state of New York and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver are seeking to defend the constitutionality of the state’s 117-year-old kosher laws, which are being challenged by a Long Island butcher.

The butcher’s lawyer, Robert Dinerstein of Commack, L.I., argues that the laws are based on “Orthodox Hebrew religious requirements,” which he said discriminate against his client, whose store is under the supervision of a Conservative rabbi.

Oral arguments last month before Judge Nina Gershon demonstrated just how complex and confusing the case is for the judge — and some of the lawyers themselves.

Assistant Attorney General Michael Siller began by telling Gershon that the state’s Department of Agriculture and Markets, which is responsible for enforcement of the kosher laws, “interprets kosher to mean whatever the person making the representation believes it means in good faith.”

But, the judge wanted to know, why do the violations issued to the butcher, Commack Self-Service Kosher Meats, say the establishment was in violation of Orthodox Hebrew religious requirements on March 22, 1993?

Siller replied that the case stemmed in part from packages of ground turkey found by a state inspector in a walk-in storage freezer. They were wrapped but did not have a label saying they had been soaked and salted.

“The question was, was there a label or not,” he said. “We do not get involved in religious disputes. We do not tell somebody you are not kosher enough or that
your definition of kosher does not purport to comply with the state’s working definition of kosher. The state does not have a working definition.”

How could the inspectors issue violations without a definition? Gershon asked.

“Orthodoxy is the standard against which all standards of kosher or kashrut are measured,” Siller said.

“Measured by the state?” asked the judge.

“Measured by anybody that purports to call themselves kosher,” said Siller.

“Everyone recognizes that Orthodox is the standard by which it all starts. . . . We the state, the department, recognize there are a variety of standards and we do not purport to have them adhere to an Orthodox standard.”

Nathan Lewin, the attorney for Silver, who intervened in the case in defense of the kosher laws as defined by Orthodox requirements, told the court that any proprietor using the word kosher must use it “in a way that the consumers understand it.”

Gershon then asked: “How would you feel about a statute that said kosher means in accordance with Conservative Jewish religious requirements?”

“I think the legislature would be, quite frankly, not reflecting what the community believes,” said Lewin. “Here the legislature and the New York courts over all these years have said the word kosher means by Orthodox standards.”

But Dinerstein told the court that such standards are “illusory — it is only as real as the rabbi you follow.” He said there is no English translation of the Code of Jewish Law, which forms the basis of the kosher laws. And he said a leading kosher supervisory agency recently published an article saying that supervisory agencies should not become a substitute for one’s own rabbi.

“Mr. Siller represented to this court that they don’t make religious determinations,” said Dinerstein. “I submit to you that by definition there is no way they can avoid making this an ecclesiastical issue.”

He said the state did just that when it issued a violation to a kosher store for selling non-kosher wine that would be kosher “according to Conservative standards. . . . We’re showing an impermissible partiality for the Orthodox tradition if this court allows [to stand] a statute which has been found by this court . . . to establish Orthodoxy as the only acceptable standard of kashrut in the state of New York.”

At another point in the hearing, Gershon questioned whether “the state is entitled to make decisions about doctrinal disputes. For example, I assume that even Orthodox religious requirements might change over time, and for the state to make a determination as to whether or not someone is in violation, they would have to look to doctrine. . . . It seems to me the question [is whether] people can be
required to meet a particular religious requirement.”

[The chancellor of the Conservative movement’s Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Ismar Schorsch, said in an interview that “on the level of principle, there is complete agreement [among Orthodox and Conservative Jews] that food needs to be sanctified. Differences are over details.”]
Good afternoon:

Today's assets-related news:

Report: Italy Went Easy on Nazis (1 article)
Slave Labor (3)
OSI: Penn Man A Nazi (& other OSI news) (4)
Holocaust heirs claim Nimrodi's ILDC withholding info on land

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http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/aponline/19991029/aponline062922_000.htm

Report: Italy Went Easy on Nazis

The Associated Press
Friday, Oct. 29, 1999; 6:29 a.m. EDT

BERLIN -- Postwar Italy blocked prosecution of Germans suspected of war crimes during the 1943-45 Nazi occupation because of fears that high-profile probes would undermine West Germany's integration into NATO, a newspaper reported today.

Italian authorities had lists of Nazi suspects, obtained from U.S. and British military officials, since the end of World War II, the Sueddeutsche Zeitung said today.

But after West Germany joined NATO in 1955, the Italian government intervened to stop prosecutors' probes because it wanted to bolster its new ally, the newspaper said.

Many of the several hundred suspects who escaped prosecution are believed to be still alive.

The newspaper said the Italian foreign minister at the time, Gaetano Martino, explained his intervention by saying that war crimes prosecutions would encourage pacifist opponents of West Germany's NATO membership.

The newspaper said its report was based on Allied documents and investigators' records.

Elite Nazi SS commandos, as well as soldiers of the regular army - the Wehrmacht - carried out reprisals for attacks by Italian partisans during World War II. Conservative estimates put the number of civilians killed at 10,000, the report said.

The newspaper did not name any of the war crimes suspects.

http://www.nando.net/24hour/fresnobee/business/story/0,1726,500051038-500083727-500269983-0,00.html

Germany may sweeten slave labor reparations offer
BERLIN (October 29, 1999 2:09 p.m. EDT http://www.nandotimes.com) - Germany wants to boost its $3.2 billion compensation offer to Nazi-era slave laborers and may postpone the next round of talks in November in order to nail down an agreement, the government's envoy said Friday.

Otto Lambsdorff said the government is pushing more German companies to contribute to the proposed compensation fund for former slave and forced laborers. Three dozen firms have agreed to participate so far.

"I know that the ($3.2 billion) we offered in the last round can't lead to a successful outcome," Lambsdorff told a news conference. "So we are studying how to improve the offer."

Survivor groups have criticized the German offer, announced Oct. 7 in Washington, as too low.

In a further sign of movement in the negotiations, a lawyer representing former slave laborers also said Friday that attorneys had scaled back their demands for the fund from $28 billion to $12.5 billion.

U.S. attorney Michael Hausfeld told Germany's WDR television that the reduction was not a reaction to Germany's initiative, and has been on the table for two weeks.

Lambsdorff said he wants the next round, currently scheduled for Nov. 16-17 in Bonn, Germany, to settle the money amount.

But he signaled he would need additional time to round up pledges from more German companies, saying it was "probably more sensible" to postpone the session.

So far, the German companies have said their offer to contribute the equivalent of $2.1 billion is final. The government would contribute $1.1 billion.

By paying compensation to people who were forced to work for the Nazi war machine during World War II, Germany hopes to atone for the past and protect German companies from U.S. class-action lawsuits by survivors.

Previous German governments had excluded compensation specifically for slave labor from more than $60 billion in reparations paid to Nazi victims, arguing the victims were technically working for private companies.

Some politicians urged German industry to be more forthcoming.

Hans-Jochen Vogel, a former chairman of the Social Democratic Party and head of a group supporting former slave laborers, called for a fund equaling $5.4 billion, to be borne mainly by corporations.

"Companies must show more flexibility," said Volker Beck of the Greens, the junior party in the governing coalition.

Compensation talks involving Germany, the United States, Jewish groups and U.S. class-action lawyers began early this year. Several eastern European countries also are taking part.

Under a settlement, most of the money would go to victims in eastern Europe who couldn't claim compensation for decades because they were behind the Iron Curtain, Lambsdorff said.

By TONY CZUCZKA

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http://www.go.com/Content?arn=a0780LBY853reulb-19991029
&qt=holocaust+&sv=IS&lk=noframes&col=NX&kt=A&ak=news1486

German Firms Say No New Holocaust Offer
06:09 a.m. Oct 29, 1999 Eastern

By Mark John
BERLIN (Reuters) - German firms seeking to pre-empt lawsuits against them by establishing a fund to compensate Nazi-era slave workers will not offer more than what is already on the table, a spokesman said Friday.

The mainly U.S. lawyers representing up to two million Holocaust survivors have rejected the total six billion marks ($3.2 billion) offered by industry and government, of which the lion's share comes from a group of 35 major German firms.

The German government has said it wants industry to increase its share of the offer and media reports earlier suggested a new offer of 10 billion marks could be made in new talks scheduled in Bonn on November 16.

"It's up to those who want to raise the German offer to make sure the money is there," Wolfgang Gibowski, spokesman of the industry fund, said of a renewed call by government mediator Otto Graf Lambsdorff for a higher offer.

"Lambsdorff has not spoken with us about that," he added.

Lambsdorff, a former economics minister, has warned of a German-U.S. trade war if the issue is not resolved. He met Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder and parliamentary leaders of the two coalition parties Thursday to discuss the issue.

"The talks covered the improvement of the offer that we are striving for," Lambsdorff told ARD television. "The companies (in the fund) are in talks with more firms."

He denied, however, that a new offer was imminent. "The 10 billion marks figure is wrong. A definitive result has not yet been reached."

END TO LEGAL ACTIONS OVER NAZI HISTORY

The launch of the fund -- whose members include blue chip companies like Siemens, DaimlerChrysler and Volkswagen -- was set for September 1, the 60th anniversary of the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland which began World War Two.

But there has been sharp disagreement on how much compensation should be offered to forced laborers and former concentration camp internees used as slaves by German firms.

Some 10,000 companies, many of which no longer exist, used 12 million slave and forced laborers to keep Hitler's war machine running during the 1939-45 Second World War.

Estimates of how many people are eligible to draw on the fund range from 700,000 to 2.3 million.

The companies insist that in return for establishing the fund they are offered guarantees protecting them from further legal actions over their Nazi history.

Lambsdorff suggested the Bonn talks next month could be postponed if it was clear they were not going to yield a result.

German lawyer Michael Witti, one of the team representing the victims, said he welcomed the pressure being put on industry by the German government to raise its offer but said even the 10 billion marks figure was not enough.

"It has to be in the double-digit billions, well over 10 billion marks," he told German Radio.

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http://www.ft.com/hippocampus/q2c4c02.htm
Friday October 29 1999

World News / Europe

GERMANY: Price not right for Holocaust victims
By Our Summaries Staff

Holocaust The debate over the amount of financial recompense German companies should provide for Holocaust victims continued on Friday with no sign of compromise after
rejection of a revised offer of DM6bn ($3.2bn).

Disagreement between the legal representatives of the claiming parties and the companies arose over the level of compensation to be awarded. Talks over the sum began in Bonn in August with an offer of DM4bn labelled "miserly" by the victims' lawyers who called for a $20bn settlement. A revised figure of DM6bn was then put forward jointly by the companies and the German government which has also been turned down.

The launch of the fund was set for September 1, to mark the 60th anniversary of the 1939 Nazi invasion of Poland which initiated the Second World War. The group of 35 German companies, including Volkswagen, Daimler-Chrysler and Siemens, insisted that in return for establishing the body they are provided with guarantees protecting them from further legal action over their persecution of workers.

During the war, some 10,000 companies, many of which no longer exist, used 12m slave and forced labourers to assist with Hitler's genocide mission. Between 700,000 and 2.3m people are thought to be eligible to draw from the fund.

The German government said it wanted its industries to increase their share of the offer and media reports have hinted at a rise of DM10bn. Otto Graf Lambsdorff, a former economics minister, denied that a higher bid was imminent saying the DM10bn figure was incorrect and that a definitive result had not been reached. A decision on a revised offer is expected to be made at talks which have been scheduled in Bonn on November 16.

Further contention over the final settlement appears inevitable, however, with German lawyers welcoming industry pressure from the government and saying that even if an increase of DM10bn were offered, it would not be enough. Michael Witti, a member of the legal team representing the victims, told German radio that the surplus amount would have to be in double-digits to be considered, and well over DM10bn.

Wolfgang Gibowski, who represents the industry body, and Mr Lambsdorff said it was in the interests of German industry to agree on a settlement, and quash escalating fears of a German-US trade war.

Germany has already paid more than DM100bn in compensation since the end of the Second World War, including substantial payments to Israel. The total payout is expected to rise as high as DM130bn by 2030 as past commitments are met.

http://dailynews.yahoo.com/h/ap/19991028/pl/nazi_case_1.html

Thursday October 28 5:31 PM ET

Penn. Man Accused of Being a Nazi

By MICHAEL J. SNIFFEN Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Justice Department filed suit Thursday to strip a retired Pennsylvania mechanic of his citizenship on grounds he served as a Nazi SS guard at three concentration camps during World War II.

In a complaint filed in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, the department's Nazi-hunting Office of Special Investigations alleged that Theodor Szehinskyj, born in Poland in 1924, was a guard for the Waffen-SS Death's Head Battalion at Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp, Warsaw Concentration Camp and Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp.

Reached by telephone in Upper Darby, Pa., a man identifying himself as Szehinskyj said only that his lawyer would respond in court.

Szehinskyj's lawyer, Andre Michniak, said, "My client categorically denies these charges. He is shocked and dumbfounded by them."

"He was taken as a slave laborer by the Nazis to Austria," Michniak said. "After three years in Austria on a farm, he ended up in late 1944 in a displaced persons camp in Germany." He said the evidence against his client may have been in Soviet custody at some point and should be carefully scrutinized.

The government alleged that Szehinskyj joined the Waffen-SS in 1943 and served in the SS Death's Head Battalion as an armed guard in the three Nazi camps from 1943 to 1945. In
that role, he assisted the persecution of civilians on the basis of race, nationality or religion, the government said.

During the period of his alleged service, prisoners at the three camps were confined, beaten, tortured, forced into slave labor and murdered.

Sachsenhausen, opened in Oranienburg, Germany, near Berlin in 1936, was the Nazis’ second largest camp, after Auschwitz, by 1943.

Warsaw was a smaller camp opened after the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in the spring of 1943. Prisoners were brought to Warsaw from other camps to work as slave laborers demolishing the Warsaw ghetto.

About 120,000 prisoners passed through Gross-Rosen and its subcamps, and an estimated 40,000 prisoners died there.

The Nazis used the concentration camps to isolate and kill Jews, Gypsies, Poles and other Nazi-designated enemies, first in Germany and later in occupied countries, said Eli M. Rosenbaum, head of the special investigations office.

"At Sachsenhausen, Gross-Rosen and Warsaw concentration camps, terror was the daily bread for tens of thousands of innocent civilians," Rosenbaum said.

U.S. Attorney Michael Stiles of Philadelphia added, "The Nazis made diabolically effective use of these camps to silence and eliminate all actual or imagined opposition to Nazi rule."

Since it began work in 1979, the special investigations office has had 63 Nazi persecutors stripped of U.S. citizenship and 52 of them have been expelled from this country. The office’s watchlist has prevented more than 150 Nazi persecutors from entering the United States. More than 250 people in this country remain under investigation by the unit, Rosenbaum said.


29 October 1999

Text: Justice Dept. Moves to Revoke U.S. Citizenship of Alleged Nazi

(Theodor Szehinskyj alleged to have worked in three Nazi camps) (710)

The Department of Justice filed a complaint October 28 to revoke the U.S. citizenship of Theodor Szehinskyj, who it alleges was a guard at three Nazi concentration camps during World War Two.

Szehinskyj, a retired machine mechanic living in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, was born in Poland in 1924. The complaint alleges that he joined the Waffen-SS in 1943 and served in the SS-Totenkopfsturmbann (SS Death’s Head Battalion) as an armed guard of civilians at the Gross-Rosen, Warsaw, and Sachsenhausen camps and "assisted in the persecution of civilians on the basis of their race, nationality, or religion."

A Justice Department press release said the proceedings to denaturalize Szehinskyj resulted from the efforts of its Office of Special Investigations (OSI) to identify and take legal action against former participants in Nazi persecution who reside in the United States. It said that since OSI began operations in 1979, 63 Nazi persecutors have lost their U.S. citizenship, 52 have been deported, and 150 have been blocked from entering the United States. More than 250 remain under investigation.

Following is the text of the release:

(begin text)
WASHINGTON, D.C. - The U.S. Department of Justice today filed a complaint to revoke the U.S. citizenship of Theodor Szehinskyj, a resident of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, who served, the complaint alleges, as a Waffen-SS Death's Head Concentration Camp Guard at Gross-Rosen Concentration Camp, Warsaw Concentration Camp, and Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp during World War II.

The complaint, filed today with the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania by the Criminal Division's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) and the U.S. Attorney's Office in Philadelphia, alleges that Szehinskyj, a retired machine mechanic who was born in Poland in 1924, joined the Waffen-SS in 1943 and served in the SS-Totenkopfsturmbann (SS Death's Head Battalion) as an armed guard of civilians at three Nazi concentration camps during the period 1943 to 1945.

As a member of the SS Death's Head Battalion at Gross Rosen, Warsaw, and Sachsenhausen, the complaint charges, Szehinskyj assisted in the persecution of civilians on the basis of their race, nationality, or religion. During the period of Szehinskyj's service at the Gross Rosen, Warsaw, and Sachsenhausen camps, prisoners were subjected to confinement, beatings, torture, slave labor, and murder.

Sachsenhausen was established in Oranienburg, near Berlin, in 1936. By 1943, it had become the second largest concentration camp after Auschwitz.

Warsaw Concentration Camp was a smaller camp, opened after the suppression of the Warsaw ghetto uprising in the spring of 1943. The prisoners were brought to Warsaw from various concentration camps, including Auschwitz, and forced to work as slave laborers, demolishing the ghetto.

Approximately 120,000 prisoners passed through Gross-Rosen and its subcamps. It is estimated that about 40,000 prisoners died there.

OSI Director Eli M. Rosenbaum said that the concentration camp system was used by the Nazis to isolate and eliminate Jews, Gypsies, Poles, and other Nazi-designated enemies, first in Germany and later in occupied areas. "At the Sachsenhausen, Gross Rosen, and Warsaw Concentration Camps, terror was the daily bread for tens of thousands of innocent civilians," said Rosenbaum. United States Attorney Michael Stiles said, "The Nazis made diabolically effective use of these camps to silence and eliminate all actual or imagined opposition to Nazi rule."

The initiation of proceedings to denaturalize Szehinskyj is a result of OSI's ongoing efforts to identify and take legal action against former participants in Nazi persecution who reside in the United States.

Since OSI began operations in 1979, 63 Nazi persecutors have been stripped of U.S. citizenship, and 52 such individuals have been removed from the United States. Additionally, more than 150 Nazi persecutors who sought to enter the United States in recent years have been blocked from doing so as a result of OSI's "Watchlist" program. More than 250 persons are currently under investigation by the Department of Justice unit, according to Rosenbaum.

(end text)
New pursuit seen on war criminals living in US

By Steve Fainaru, Globe Staff, 10/29/99

NEW YORK - The Senate is poised to pass legislation that would greatly expand the powers of the Justice Department's anti-Nazi unit, giving it responsibility for pursuing all modern-day war criminals who have taken refuge in the United States.

The bill was prompted by an investigation by The Boston Globe in May that revealed how scores of suspected human rights criminals have exploited the US government refugee program, antiquated immigration laws and, in some cases, political connections to gain residency and avoid prosecution.

"It will become law, and it will say that the United States is not a safe haven for war criminals," said Senator Patrick J. Leahy, Democrat of Vermont, who introduced the bill after the Globe reported that a member of a ruthless Bosnian Serb paramilitary unit involved in ethnic cleansing had settled with his family outside Burlington, Vt.

"It is inconceivable to have a situation where people who have committed crimes that virtually every American would find abhorrent are able to flee to America to hide," Leahy said yesterday.

An identical bill introduced in the House of Representatives this month is also said to have broad bipartisan support but has not reached the floor. The Clinton administration has taken no public position on either bill. But a Justice Department official said the administration supports the reform efforts, despite reservations about shifting responsibility for war crimes cases from the Immigration and Naturalization Service to the anti-Nazi unit.

Regardless of those reservations, the administration is unlikely to fight the Senate bill, the official, who asked not to be identified, said.

The Leahy bill contains two key provisions. The first would give funding and authority to the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations to probe all suspected war criminals in the United States. Since its founding in 1979, the OSI has been limited to hunting down hundreds of former Nazis and their allies who slipped into the United States after World War II. The unit has gained a reputation as the most effective Nazi-fighting organization in the world, but is threatened with obsolescence as aging Nazis continue to die.

The second provision would amend the Immigration and Nationality Act so that immigrants who committed torture abroad can be excluded from the United States or expelled. Under current law, immigrants can be held accountable for atrocities only if they are found to have participated in Nazi persecutions or committed genocide.

The Senate Judiciary Committee approved the bill unanimously last week, a critical hurdle toward passage. Leahy won the committee approval by combining his original bill with several international crime measures also supported by Senator Orrin Hatch, the Republican from Utah.

Leahy's aides said they are optimistic that the Senate will approve the bill by 'unanimous consent' before the end of the Congressional session next month. Under that procedure, non-controversial bills are passed with neither a floor debate nor a roll-call vote, but any senator can stall the legislation by raising an objection.

The bill so far has encountered little resistance. But the senator's aides cautioned that during the legislative scramble before the end of the session, objections sometimes arise as lawmakers seek to gain leverage for their own legislation, even if the objections are unrelated to the bill itself.

If the Senate bill passes before the end of the session, the House is expected to take up
the issue when Congress reconvenes in January.

US Representative Mark Foley, a Republican from Port St. Lucie, Fla., said he decided to introduce the House bill after the Globe reported that Carl Dorelien, a former colonel in the Haitian regime ousted by the 1994 US invasion, has been living quietly in his district.

The congressman predicted that Dorelien would become "the poster child" for new laws designed to "send him packing.

"Our nation has always prided itself in giving refuge to the poor and huddled masses; I hope that hasn't changed to where we're giving refuge to the poor and huddled masses and those who oppress them," Foley said.

Recognition of the need for a centralized authority to handle modern-day war crimes cases is nearly universal. However, differences remain inside and outside the government over how it should be organized, and whether the new legislation is the best way to attack the growing problem.

The Senate bill, for example, has set off a turf war between the INS and OSI over who should be given the new funding and authority. INS officials said shifting the authority to OSI would be the equivalent of setting up a parallel version of the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

However, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has been widely criticized for its handling of cases involving suspected human rights abusers. In comparison with the Office of Special Investigations, which has stripped 61 former Nazis of US citizenship, deported 48, and compiled a "watchlist" of 60,000 suspected war criminals for exclusion from the United States, the Immigration and Naturalization Service has no records of having deported an immigrant on evidence of involvement in human rights abuses.

Admitting that reform is needed, the agency announced last month it was creating a separate legal division to prosecute modern-day war criminals and other immigration matters of national security. Immigration and Naturalization Service and Justice Department officials had hoped the new division would form the framework for a new war crimes unit.

"It may be that when the bill is pending on the House side that we'll begin to take account of what the administration has to say," said a Leahy aide who asked not to be identified.

Meanwhile, several human rights observers have questioned whether the Senate bill goes far enough. Although the new law would add torture to the criminal criteria for excluding or deporting an immigrant, it says nothing about other crimes against humanity, such as summary execution or kidnapping.

Shawn Roberts, general counsel for the Center for Justice and Accountability, a San Francisco-based group funded by Amnesty International, said the group supports Leahy's efforts but is concerned that the bill is too narrow. "We'd like them to take a hard look at the definitions," Roberts said.

The Justice Department, which oversees both the Immigration and Naturalization Service and the Office of Special Investigations, also is skeptical of how an expanded version of the Office of Special Investigations would be funded. No figures have been given for how the new division would be paid for. The Senate bill stipulates only that the agency is to be allotted "such sums as may be necessary to carry out the additional duties..."

It appears that the expansion could cost considerably more than the Office of Special Investigations' current $3.7 million budget. The division is expected to require additional staffing, including trained investigators, translators, lawyers, and paralegals.

Canada, which created its own Modern War Crime Unit in 1996 in response to press reports similar to the Globe investigation, budgeted $46.8 million over three years.

Leahy said the funding is a matter of setting priorities.

"We can find $47 million for Ken Starr to carry out a fruitless investigation of a $20,000 land deal and a tawdry affair on the part of the president," he said. "Well, if we spent $47 million for that, we can find that much money to investigate people involved
in murder, arson, rape, torture, and other heinous crimes.'

This story ran on page A01 of the Boston Globe on 10/29/99.

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http://www.thejewishweek.com/jwcurr.exe?9910296

The (NY) Jewish Week

October 29, 1999 / 12 Cheshvan 5760

New Life For OSI?
By: James D. Besser,

Just when its mission was winding down, the perpetually underfunded Office of Special Investigations (OSI) - the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting unit - may get a big shot in the arm.

New legislation that recently cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee would extend the Office of Special Investigation's reach to include the perpetrators of other, post-World War II genocides, as well as those accused of torture.

The measure, introduced by Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) would also formalize the existence of the agency, which was created in 1979 and has successfully sought the denaturalization of dozens of Nazi-era war criminals who entered this country illegally. Leahy has promised that the additional responsibilities would not impair OSI's Nazi-hunting mission.

Jewish activists generally support the proposal, although they are watching closely to make sure enough extra money is appropriated to fund the new activities.

But the proposal has sparked resistance from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, which has jurisdiction over those who enter this country illegally.

Eli Rosenbaum, OSI's director, downplayed that internal fight.

"We appreciate the vote of confidence from Sen. Leahy and the Judiciary Committee. But I would expect that it will be for the attorney general, working with Congress, to decide which part of the Justice Department will handle which cases."

He added that he is confident that his or any other Justice Department agency is capable of handling the added cases, which could stem from the horrors in Rwanda, Cambodia or the former Yugoslavia, among others.

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http://www3.haaretz.co.il/eng/htms/kat10_10.htm

Holocaust heirs claim Nimrodi's ILDC withholding info on land

Friday, October 29, 1999

By Moshe Reinfeld, Ha'aretz Supreme Court Correspondent

A Jerusalem attorney representing the heirs of people who died in the Holocaust claims that the Israel Land Development Company (Hachsharat Hayishuv), which is owned by the Nimrodi family, is using illegal means to stop the descendants from obtaining information on valuable land that it is holding in trust.

This claim is the basis of a suit submitted yesterday by attorney Roland Roth in the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court in order to force public disclosure of the documents. Roth says he appealed to the company in the past, noting that it is only right that an Israeli company return the property of Holocaust victims at a time when the State of Israel and Jewish organizations around the world are demanding the same thing from foreign governments. In response, ILDC denied that any properties were delivered to it to manage in trust.
According to the suit, the ILDC (formerly an executive branch of the Jewish Agency) purchased land in pre-State Israel for Jews living abroad – most of them in Poland and Egypt – before World War II. The company still holds land worth at least $90 million. Although the land is registered in its name, it was purchased by Jews living abroad through contracts and held in trust by the ILDC. Some of the contracts are stored in the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem.

The Nimrodi family bought the ILDC about 12 years ago. Both the Jewish Agency and the new owners claimed they "forgot" that the company had this land. Roth stresses that the Nimrodis paid only $28 million for the ILDC, whose current value is estimated at $400 million. According to Roth, a significant part of the enormous profit the family made from the deal came from the land, which actually belongs to Holocaust victims and their heirs.

The suit claims that ILDC maintains a card file of these lands but does everything possible to prevent access to this information, in violation of the law. Roth emphasizes that ILDC is a publicly-traded company, which is obligated to report in its financial statements that some of its property belongs to others.

The ILDC has not yet submitted its defense. Attorney Yehoshua Nener, who represents the company, told Ha'aretz last night that he has not yet seen the indictment. He said it probably refers to properties purchased in the 1940s by a group of Diaspora Jews through the "Kehilat Zion America" company. Some of the properties were later transferred to ILDC through the Custodian of Abandoned Property. Nener added that suits had been filed against the ILDC regarding some of these plots, but all had been rejected by the courts for lack of evidence and other reasons.

**Visit the Commission's website at www.pcha.gov/news.htm for continually-updated coverage of Holocaust Assets issues**

Den deutschen Unternehmen ratschlägt Reinharz, nicht die Fehler der Schweizer Banken zu wiederholen und die Verhandlungen unnötig in die Länge zu ziehen. „Dies ist keine Frage des Geldes, es ist eine Frage der Ehre und der Gerechtigkeit. Es geht darum, öffentlich anzuerkennen und Verantwortung dafür zu übernehmen, dass dem jüdischen Volk Unrecht geschehen ist“, sagt Reinharz. Eine angemessene Wiedergutmachung für das Leben und die Chancen, die den Nazi-Opfern während der Zwangsarbeit und Zwangsarbeitern der Nazi-Opfern zu helfen und die- nen, werden irgendwann einmal 20 Milliarden nicht mehr genug sein und 50 Milliarden Mark auch nicht.“

Kein Vergessen möglich

Solange sich die deutsche Wirtschaft von dem Gefühl leiten lasse, werde „in etwas hereingedrungen, und weiter darüber streite, ob „sechs, sechseinhalb oder bloß fünf Milliarden“ angemessen seien, würden die Schwierigkeiten nur wachsen, sagt Reinharz. Eine Einigung mit den jüdischen Opfern könne erst dann erreicht werden, wenn die deutsche Seite den Zeitdruck vermißte, „dass ihr tatsächlich daran liegt, den ehemaligen Zwangsarbeitern zu helfen und diesen Kapitel endlich zu schließen“.

Die Teilnahme von Anwälten an den Entschädigungs-Verhandlungen wertet Reinharz für die deutschen Banken als unbedingt glücklich: „Die Anwälte sind zwar notwendig, um den Ball ins Rollen zu bekommen“, meint Reinharz. Doch je länger sie bei den Verhandlungen anwesend seien, desto schwieriger sei eine Einigung zu erzielen. „Anwälte übernehmen diese Fälle, um Profit zu machen“, sagt Reinharz. „Und im Fall der Schweizer Banken weiß ich nicht, ob es wirklich im besten Interesse der Opfer war. Dies sei ein weiterer Grund, um die Verhandlungen schnellstmöglich zu einem Abschluss zu bringen."

Zur Person

Jehuda Reinharz

1944 in Haifa (Israel) geboren, kam Jehuda Reinharz mit seinen Eltern 1958 nach Essen, wo er drei Jahre lang das Humboldt-Gymnasium besuchte.
