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The Holocaust — Recovery of Assets from World War II: A Chronology (May 1995 to Present)

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Summary

This report is a compilation of recent investigations (May 7, 1995 - July 26, 2000) into the role of Swiss banks and other institutions dealing with the recovery of hidden or stolen assets of victims of the Holocaust from World War II (1939-1945). Included is an overview of the worldwide inquiry by Switzerland, the United States Congress, and the governments of other nations in the following areas: dormant bank accounts; looted art and cultural objects; Nazi gold transfers; policy claims against European insurance companies by Holocaust survivors and their heirs; and compensation for victims of forced and slave labor, including the creation of a \$5.2 billion compensation fund for surviving laborers by the German government and German industries.

Related reports on this topic include the following:

- CRS Report 98-699, *Holocaust Survivor and Heir Lawsuits to Recover Swiss Bank Deposits*;
- CRS Report RL30615, *Holocaust-Era Assets: A Bibliography*;
- CRS Report RL30396, *Holocaust-Era Assets: A Guide for Filing Claims and a List of Compensation Programs*;
- CRS Report RL30381, *Holocaust-Era Insurance Claims: Background and Issues*;
- CRS Report 98-903, *Holocaust-Related Legislation of the 105th Congress*;
- CRS Report 98-329, *Nazi War Crimes Records Disclosure: Public Law No. P.L. 105-246*.

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The Holocaust — Recovery of Assets from World War II: A Chronology (May 1995 to Present)

This chronology begins on May 7, 1995, with the official apology by then Swiss President Kaspar Villinger for his country's role in denying asylum to countless Jewish refugees during World War II, and continues through to the activity of the ensuing Congresses including the first hearings held by the U.S. Senate Banking Committee during the 104th Congress, second session (1996) on Swiss banks and Holocaust victims; legislation introduced and passed during the 105th Congress (1997-1998); and legislation recently introduced during the 106th Congress (1999-2000). The information presented is compiled from congressional hearings, press reports, and news articles from commercial databases such as NEXIS/LEXIS, WESTLAW, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), and "news tracker" via the Excite search engine on the Internet.

Chronology

1995

05/07/95 An official apology was issued by then President of Switzerland, Kaspar Villinger, for his country's role in denying asylum to countless Jewish refugees during the war; he stated that Switzerland "bears a considerable burden of guilt for the treatment of the Jews." His remarks were made in a speech to a special session of Parliament marking the 50th anniversary of V-E Day, the Allied victory in Europe.

09/01/95 The Swiss Banking Association (SBA) announced the discovery of \$34 million in dormant bank accounts that may have belonged to Holocaust victims. The SBA also agreed to relax strict secrecy laws only for dormant accounts to help locate missing Jewish and non-Jewish assets from the war era.

1996

01/01/96 The SBA established a research center under the direction of Hanspeter Haeni, the bankers' ombudsman, to act as an intermediary between persons seeking funds from orphaned or dormant accounts and the Swiss banking community.

02/07/96 The SBA announced that \$32 million were found in 775 additional dormant accounts opened prior to 1945, including those of non-European origin.

04/23/96 The U.S. Senate Banking Committee headed by Senator Alfonse D'Amato held the first hearing on the status of assets deposited in Swiss banks by European Jews and other victims of the Holocaust. The methodology of the accounting records used by Swiss financial institutions came under sharp criticism as well as their treatment of Holocaust survivors/heirs, who had previously requested information on lost accounts but were rebuffed by Swiss bank officials. Printed as Senate Hearing 104-582.

05/02/96 The World Jewish Congress (WJC), the World Jewish Restitution Organization, the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, and the SBA signed an agreement that would relax Swiss banking secrecy laws to allow a joint independent commission to reexamine dormant Swiss accounts. An Independent Committee of Eminent Persons led by Paul Volcker, former chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve System, was chosen to audit an earlier study by the Swiss bankers' ombudsman. The other six panel members are Professor Curt Gasteyer, a Swiss historian; Alain Hirsh, an expert on security and accounting; Klaus Jakobi, a former Swiss ambassador to the United States; Avraham Burg, chairman of the Jewish Agency in Israel; Rueben Beraja, chairman of the Latin American Jewish Congress; and Ronald Lauder, an American representing Jewish interests.

09/10/96 The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office released its document, *Nazi Gold: Information from the British Archives*, which alleged the Allies knew of the large amounts of Nazi gold exported to Switzerland, but were afraid of losing Swiss support in the postwar economic recovery plan. The report also alleged that the Swiss could be holding more than \$550 million worth of gold looted by Nazi Germany, valued today at \$7 billion.

09/16/96 Besieged by international criticism, the Swiss Parliament agreed to a full investigation into assets stolen by the Nazis. An independent commission of historians and banking and legal experts were recommended to investigate Switzerland's role as a financial center for looted assets.

10/03/96 Gizella Weiss Haus, a Holocaust survivor living in Brooklyn, filed the first class action suit in a U.S. federal court in New York against various Swiss banks for allegedly refusing to return assets deposited before and during the war. The banks named in the suit included the Swiss Bank Corporation (also known as the Swiss National Bank), the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), and other banking institutions. More than 4,000 plaintiffs, Jews and non-Jews worldwide, were named in the lawsuit.

10/04/96 The U.S. Department of State announced that William Slany, chief historian of the Department of State, would lead investigations in the National Archives regarding Nazi gold in Swiss banks. The focus would be on the diplomatic efforts by the United States after the war and diplomatic contacts with the Swiss government.

10/18/96 A second class action complaint was filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of New York on behalf of three classes of plaintiffs against the UBS for withholding assets deposited during the war years. The three classes of plaintiffs were defined as: 1) rightful owners of looted assets (those who had their assets looted

prior to or during internment in the concentration camps); 2) slave laborers and their heirs; and 3) certain Swiss bank depositors and their heirs (those who made deposit prior to and during the war years and have been unable to reclaim them).

10/24/96 In response to increasing world scrutiny, Flavio Cotti, the Swiss foreign minister, created a special task force whose mission is to coordinate Swiss diplomatic response to international criticism of Switzerland and its financial institutions. This special task force is directed by Special Ambassador Thomas Borer.

10/30/96 President Clinton wrote a letter to World Jewish Congress (WJC) president Edgar Bronfman and asked him to expand the probe into Nazi assets, stating that his Administration “would make it a priority to classify and make available to the public all the relevant documents.” President Clinton named Stuart Eizenstat, then Undersecretary of Commerce, to coordinate efforts by the U.S. government.

11/13/96 The Swiss bankers’ ombudsman, Hanspeter Haeni, announced that only 11,000 Swiss francs (\$8,750) from 1.6 million francs (\$1.26 million) in unclaimed dormant accounts were linked directly to Holocaust victims. These initial findings were sharply criticized by the WJC as “unilateral and unacceptable.”

11/19/96 Paul Volcker, head of the special auditing committee established in May 1996, announced that three American accounting firms (Arthur Andersen, KPMG Peat Marwick, and Price Waterhouse) were hired to investigate dormant Swiss accounts during the World War II era in response to criticism of the findings by the Swiss bankers’ ombudsman.

11/26/96 The Argentine Central Bank in Buenos Aires released five volumes of documents to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. These transactions contained information on funds including gold transferred from banks in Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal to Argentina between 1939 and 1949.

11/27/96 The upper house of the Swiss Parliament voted 37-0 to examine Switzerland’s financial dealings with Nazi Germany and the fate of Jewish assets in Swiss accounts.

12/02/96 The WJC announced that it had uncovered documents from April 1945 in the National Archives pertaining to the ongoing inquiry. Letters from the United States embassy in Buenos Aires to acting Secretary of State Joseph Grew detailed the extent of Nazi investment in Argentina during the war. They were dubbed the “Morgenthau Letters” for including a letter from U.S. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. dated February 1945. These documents reported that the Nazis had invested \$500 million in commercial firms, \$500 million in farms and ranches, \$105 million in banks, and \$40 million in insurance companies in Argentina between 1939 and 1944.

12/09/96 Both houses of the Swiss Parliament passed final legislation that waived the 3-month waiting period for laws to take force, thus allowing an independent panel to begin studying how much wealth was deposited into Swiss banks prior to and during World War II, and whether the Swiss had done enough to identify lost assets.

12/11/96 The U.S. House Banking Committee held a hearing on Swiss banks and Jewish assets during World War II. Among the witnesses before the committee were Special Ambassador Thomas Borer, chief of the Swiss Foreign Ministry Task Force on the Swiss bank question; Edgar Bronfman, president of the WJC; Paul Volcker, chairman of the Committee of Eminent Persons; Senator D'Amato, chairman of the U.S. Senate Banking Committee; and various Holocaust survivors/heirs.

12/19/96 Peter Hug and Marc Perrenoud, two independent historians commissioned by the Swiss government, released their report on Swiss postwar deals with Nazi gold. Authorized in October 1996, this report investigated claims that assets from victims of the Holocaust were used by the Swiss to compensate its citizens whose property was seized by countries in Eastern Europe. The report rejected the charge that such funds were paid directly to Swiss citizens, but said instead they were used to pay Poland and Hungary under postwar compensation agreements.

12/20/96 Swiss historian Jean-François Bergier was chosen to head a nine-member Independent Commission of Experts (ICE) directed by the Swiss government to reexamine its wartime activities. The other members are Swiss historians Jacques Picard and Jakob Tanner; Joseph Voyame, a lawyer and former official in the Swiss justice ministry; Harold James from Princeton University; Wladyslaw Bartoszewski, a Jewish historian from Warsaw; Saul Friedlaender, an Israeli historian; and Sybil Milton, with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

12/24/96 During an interview in Switzerland, outgoing Swiss President Jean-Pascal Delamuraz rejected the creation of a \$250 million compensation fund as “blackmail” and said that “such a fund would be considered an admission of guilt.” This fund was proposed earlier in the month to Special Ambassador Borer by representatives of the WJC and Senator D'Amato as a good-faith gesture to help elderly and destitute Jews pending the outcome of the investigations.

1997

01/05/97 Jewish leaders condemned Switzerland for not repudiating the remarks by Delamuraz. Israel Singer, secretary-general of the WJC, stated that the WJC and the Jewish Agency would support measures, including a boycott, unless Delamuraz's remarks were “rejected by Switzerland and its bankers clearly and decisively.”

01/07/97 The Swiss cabinet offered to create a compensation fund with the \$32 million found by the Swiss bankers' ombudsman in November 1996. Their offer was firmly rejected by the WJC.

01/12/97 A memorandum dated January 12, 1946, to the head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, was found in the National Archives. It detailed how the Swiss National Bank sent truckloads of gold looted by the Nazis to Spain and Portugal in vehicles bearing the Swiss emblem.

01/21/97 Documents uncovered in the archives of the Riksbank, Sweden's Central Bank, revealed that it may have received gold stolen by Nazi Germany. The Riksbank

documents indicated that between 1939 and 1944, the bank bought 76,040 pounds of gold from Nazi Germany.

01/23/97 The Swiss government endorsed a plan for a memorial fund of \$70 million to compensate victims/heirs who claimed dormant assets in Swiss banks.

01/25/97 French Minister Alan Juppé announced the creation of a task force to investigate the whereabouts of funds or property confiscated from Jewish owners by the Nazis or the Vichy regime during World War II.

01/27/97 Switzerland's ambassador to the United States, Carlo Jagmetti, resigned following the disclosure of a confidential strategy paper he wrote in December 1996, urging Switzerland to "wage war" against international criticism that Swiss banks failed to account for missing assets of Holocaust victims and "not to trust most of the adversaries."

01/29/97 Alfred de Fago, Switzerland's general consul in New York, was named Switzerland's ambassador to the United States.

02/02/97 The Dutch Foreign Ministry announced that a commission of historians and financial experts would investigate the whereabouts of 75 tons of gold reserves. According to Dutch and German records, these gold reserves were looted by the Nazis and may still be hidden in Swiss bank accounts or may have been transferred to another neutral nation during the war.

02/06/97 The three major Swiss banks—Crédit Suisse, Swiss Bank Corporation, and the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS)—announced the creation of a special Swiss humanitarian fund for Holocaust victims of 100 million Swiss francs (U.S. \$70 million) to benefit victims of the Holocaust.

02/26/97 The Swiss government gave final approval to a Holocaust Memorial Fund (a.k.a. Swiss Humanitarian Fund) planned by the three major Swiss banks for Jewish and non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

02/28/97 Christoph Blocher, chairman of the Swiss chemical company EMS Chemie and a member of Parliament, stated that contributing to a fund for Holocaust survivors "was an admission of guilt" and that "Switzerland had no reason to apologize for doing business with Nazi Germany in order to survive as a neutral country."

03/04/97 President Carlos Menem of Argentina offered Jewish groups full access to its Central Bank archives to investigate whether gold looted by the Nazis was transferred to Argentina via neutral European nations such as Switzerland, Spain, and Portugal. This offer was in response to a written request by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, which also sent letters to Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, and Uruguay.

03/05/97 Swiss President Arnold Koller proposed, in a special address to Parliament, the creation of the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity, a humanitarian fund of 7 billion Swiss francs (U.S. \$4.7 billion). The Foundation would donate up to SFr 300 million

a year to needy recipients in Switzerland and abroad from profits from revaluing SFr 5 million in gold reserves from the Swiss Central Bank. According to President Koller, the beneficiaries would include “victims of poverty and catastrophes, of genocide, and other serious human rights abuses, and for victims of the Holocaust.”

03/06/97 The Swiss Central Bank offered to contribute SFr 70 million to the Holocaust Memorial Fund but it awaits approval from the Swiss Parliament. A federation of Swiss companies also pledged to contribute SFr 46 million to the special humanitarian fund.

03/07/97 Swiss historian Jean François Bergier, the chairman of the Independent Commission of Experts (ICE), announced that the ICE needed more time before issuing its first report to the Swiss government, which was expected by mid-1997.

03/11/97 Elan Steinberg, the executive director of the WJC, announced that the Swedish government had launched an investigation into its wartime dealings with Nazi Germany. The WJC stated that 900 dormant accounts believed to be those of Holocaust victims had been discovered in Swedish banks.

03/12/97 Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti arrived for a 3-day visit to New York and Washington aimed at improving Switzerland’s image after months of criticism. He met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and then Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat.

03/15/97 The French newspaper, *Le Monde*, reported that several French banks kept funds deposited by Jewish owners during the war that are today reportedly worth \$135 million. *Le Monde’s* investigation concluded that government bureaucracy and confusion after the war were to blame rather than any intentional policy.

03/18/97 The Simon Wiesenthal Center called for the Swiss government to open its files on François Genoud, a Swiss Nazi who managed funds for the Third Reich and later provided funds for international terrorists. He was believed to have been a German and Swiss agent and was identified by Nazi-hunters for being instrumental in transferring gold from Swiss banks to Latin America via Spain.

03/20/97 The Swiss National Bank confirmed allegations that it had aided other European neutrals (Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey) to buy millions of dollars worth of gold looted by Nazi Germany. According to the study, the National Bank bought 1.7 billion Swiss francs (U.S. \$425 million) of gold between 1940 and 1945.

03/31/97 A \$7 billion class-action suit was filed in the U.S. District Court in Manhattan by attorney Edward Fagan on behalf of a dozen American plaintiffs against seven of Europe’s largest insurers. The suit accused the insurers of failing to honor policies bought before the war, and in some cases, giving the money to the Nazis. The seven companies named in the lawsuit are: Assicurazioni Generali S.p.A. of Trieste, Italy; Wiener Alliance Versicherungs Aktiengesellschaft of Vienna; A.G.F. Assurances Générale de France Vie of Paris; Riunione Adriatica Di Sicurtà S.p.A. Consolidated of Milan; Der Anker Allgemeine Versicherungs AG of Vienna; Bavarian Reinsurance Co. (a.k.a. Bayerische Allgemeine Versicherungs) of Munich; and Allianz Group of Munich.

04/16/97 The Swiss cabinet appointed the president and three members of a board that will run the Humanitarian Fund for Holocaust victims. Rolf Bloch, head of the Swiss Federation of Hebrew Congregations, was named to lead the seven-member board. The other three Swiss appointees are all former local and federal government officials: Rene Bacher, Josi Meier, and Bernard Ziegler.

04/16/97 Portugal's Central Bank published a statistical breakdown of its wartime gold movements but stressed that it had found no evidence that it was actively involved in laundering gold looted by the Nazis.

05/01/97 The Swiss government appointed Elie Wiesel honorary chairman of the Swiss Humanitarian Fund. He later declined the position in a letter dated May 6 to Swiss Foreign Minister Flavio Cotti. The other two international members are Israeli statesman Yosef Burg and Israeli Knesset member Avraham Hirschson. Edgar Bronfman, head of the WJC, was later named as a replacement for Wiesel.

05/06/97 The U.S. Senate Banking Committee held a hearing on the shredding of Holocaust-era documents. This hearing was printed as Senate Hearing 105-152.

05/06/97 The British Foreign and Commonwealth Office published *Nazi Gold: Information from the British Archives, Part II* on the fate of gold recovered by the Allies. This was a follow-up to its report of September 1996.

05/07/97 The Historian's Office of the U.S. Department of State released its report, *U.S. and Allied Efforts to Recover and Restore Gold and Other Assets Stolen or Hidden by Germany During World War II: Preliminary Study*, also known as the "Eizenstat Report." Presented by William Slany, the chief historian at the State Department, and then Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat, this report criticized the Swiss for having been bankers to the Nazis and, thus, accountable for prolonging the war. Greg Bradsher of the National Archives also prepared an appendix *Finding Aid* to accompany this report.

05/15/97 The U.S. Senate Banking Committee chaired by Senator D'Amato held a hearing on the Eizenstat Report that was broadcast live in Switzerland. This hearing was printed as Senate Hearing 105-176.

05/19/97 Senator D'Amato introduced private legislation (S. 768) for the relief of Christoph Meili, his wife, and two children. Meili, a former Swiss security guard at the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS), discovered documents relating to pre-World War II dormant accounts that were to be shredded. Meili took the documents and turned them over to Jewish groups. He was fired by the UBS and faced prosecution for violating Swiss banking secrecy laws before fleeing abroad.

05/28/97 Swiss historian Mario Cerruti uncovered a document from 1946 in Swiss diplomatic archives that detailed how Switzerland exported arms and war material to Nazi Germany worth \$640 million between 1940 and September 1944.

06/25/97 U.S. House Banking and Financial Services Committee, chaired by Representative James Leach, held a hearing on gold taken from Holocaust victims by

Nazi Germany. Among those testifying were Senator D'Amato, Undersecretary of Commerce Stuart Eizenstat, and others.

07/07/97 Rolf Bloch, chairman of the Swiss Humanitarian Fund, announced that the Fund would dispense the first payments to needy Holocaust victims in Eastern Europe by October 1997.

07/23/97 The Swiss Banking Association (SBA) printed the names of over 1,870 pre-1945 dormant accounts in major newspapers worldwide and on the Internet.

07/29/97 President Clinton signed S. 768, granting legal residency to Christoph Meili and his family. It became Private Law 105-1.

08/01/97 A bipartisan letter signed by 82 U.S. Senators was sent to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, urging his government to pay pensions to Holocaust survivors in the former Soviet Eastern Bloc. Germany had already paid more than \$54 billion to Holocaust survivors in Western Europe, but very little to survivors in Eastern Europe.

08/06/97 British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced that an International Conference on Nazi Gold would take place in London, December 2-4, 1997.

08/22/97 Insurance claims by Holocaust survivors and heirs were the focus of a meeting by the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC) at its fall national meeting in Washington, D.C. A Holocaust Insurance Issues Working Group, headed by Deborah Senn, Washington State Commissioner of Insurance, discussed the class-action lawsuit filed by Holocaust survivors in March 1997 against 16 European insurance companies for unpaid insurance and property/casualty policies.

10/02/97 A study conducted for the WJC concluded that Nazi Germany looted \$8.5 billion in gold from 1933-1945 from nations conquered by Germany. One-third of that amount came from individuals and private businesses, while two-thirds came from central banks. According to this study, an estimated \$2 million to \$3 million from privately owned gold ended up in Swiss banks.

10/29/97 The second list of dormant bank accounts was released by the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA). Included on this list were dormant accounts of non-Swiss citizens opened prior to May 9, 1945, bank accounts by Swiss nationals that had been dormant since the end of World War II, and additional non-Swiss dormant accounts that had been identified since the first list was published in July 1997.

11/05/97 Senator Mike DeWine introduced legislation (S. 1379), the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, to amend the National Security Act of 1947 to require disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act regarding Nazi war criminal records and to create a special interagency group to identify, declassify, and make available to the public all Nazi war records held by the U.S. government.

11/13/97 Senator Alfonse D'Amato introduced legislation (S. 1564), the Holocaust Victims Redress Act, to provide redress for inadequate restitution of assets seized by the U.S. government during World War II which belonged to victims of the

Holocaust. This legislation called for \$25 million over the next three years and an additional \$5 million for archival research. S. 1564 was passed by voice vote in the Senate.

11/13/97 A resolution (S.Con.Res. 39) sponsored by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan was passed in the Senate. This concurrent resolution expressed “a sense of Congress that the German government should expand and simplify its reparation’s system, provide reparations to Holocaust survivors in Eastern and Central Europe, and set up a fund to help cover the medical expenses of Holocaust survivors.”

12/02/97 The British Foreign Office hosted the Nazi Gold Conference in London, December 2-4, 1997. Forty-one nations were represented including the U.S. delegation headed by Stuart Eizenstat, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs. At the Conference, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced the establishment of a Fund for Victims of Nazi Persecution at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York that would go to survivors of the Holocaust. On behalf of the United States, Eizenstat pledged \$4 million and an additional \$25 million over the next three years with congressional approval. Argentina, Luxembourg, and others indicated that they would contribute to the fund, while France vowed to establish a separate fund. Criticism at the Nazi Gold Conference was aimed at the Vatican, whose representatives came only as observers. The Vatican is still unwilling to open its wartime archives to international scrutiny. A follow-up conference on the issues of looted art objects and insurance claims was planned for November 30 -December 3, 1998, at the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

12/17/97 A class-action suit was filed in federal court in Brooklyn, New York, on behalf of Fernande Bodner and Anna Zajdenberg, two French Jews living in New York, against nine international banks that operated in Vichy France. The banks named in the suit were Crédit Lyonnais, Société Générale, Banque Paribas, Banque National de Paris, Crédit Commercial de France, Crédit Agricole, Banque Française du Commerce Extérieur, Banque Worms Capital Corp., and Barclays Bank of the United Kingdom. The lawsuit alleged that the banks blocked access to Jewish accounts under the Vichy regime, and then after the war failed to account for them.

1998

01/07/98 Manhattan District Attorney Robert Morgenthau served a subpoena on the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), ordering it to hold two paintings by 19th century Austrian Expressionist painter Egon Schiele. The two paintings, “Portrait of Wally” and “Dead City,” were part of a traveling exhibition, “Egon Schiele: The Leopold Collection,” from the Leopold Museum in Vienna, Austria. These paintings were claimed by the heirs of Lea Bondi Jaray and Fritz Grünbaum as family property lost during World War II.

01/12/98 The German government announced that it would create a \$110 million reparations fund for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust living in countries of the former Eastern Bloc. The first payments were expected to begin in July 1998 and would assist between 18,000-20,000 Jewish survivors.

01/13/98 A report, *The Unwanted Guests: Swiss Forced Labor Camps, 1940-1944*, by American historian Alan M. Schom, was released by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. According to the report, 62 Swiss slave-labor camps held between 17,000 to 22,000 Jewish men, women, and children, who were required to perform mandatory labor with little or no compensation. Schom's report stated that 70% of Jewish refugees were held in these camps. Rabbi Marvin Hier, director of the Wiesenthal Center, called for Switzerland to apologize for its treatment of Jewish refugees.

01/14/98 Swiss officials objected to Schom's report on Swiss labor camps as "insulting and dishonest" and asserted that Jews were treated no differently from other refugees. Ambassador Thomas Borer, head of the Swiss Task Force investigating Switzerland's role during World War II, decried the allegations as "outrageous" and stated that Jews and gentiles were held equally in "no-frills" labor camps and that they received wages and meals similar to that of Swiss soldiers.

01/27/98 The Holocaust Victims Redress Act, S. 1564, passed by voice vote in the House.

01/28/98 Representative Eliot Engel introduced H.R.3121, known as the Holocaust Victims Insurance Act. This legislation would require insurance companies to disclose how many policies they wrote for Holocaust victims and to pay the beneficiaries. Companies failing to report this information would face fines of \$1,000 a day. It would also direct the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to produce a registry of Holocaust victims so that names could be checked against policies.

01/31/98 First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton praised Switzerland's efforts to "uncover the truth about its role in World War II" and its efforts to raise money for Holocaust victims in a speech given in Zurich during a 3-day visit.

02/03/98 Representative Mark Foley introduced H.R.3143, the Comprehensive Holocaust Accountability in Insurance Measure, which would prohibit insurance companies from doing business in the United States unless they disclose any financial dealings they had with Holocaust victims. It would also prohibit insured depository institutions from transacting business with or on behalf of such foreign insurance companies.

02/05/98 Senator D'Amato urged the Federal Reserve to reject the merger of U.S. operations of the Swiss Bank Corp. and the Union Bank of Switzerland. In a letter to Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve Board, D'Amato stated that the two banks "have yet to provide answers to questions regarding their conduct in the disposition of assets of Holocaust victims and their record of collaboration with the Nazis during the war."

02/12/98 The U.S. House Banking and Financial Services Committee, chaired by Representative James Leach, held a hearing on the legal status of art objects seized by the Nazis and on World War II-era insurance claims by Holocaust survivors and their heirs. Among those testifying were Washington Insurance Commissioner Deborah Senn, Chair of the NAIC Working Group on Holocaust and Insurance Issues; Philippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New

York; Chuck Quackenbush, California Insurance Commissioner; and Ronald S. Lauder, chairman of the WJC's art recovery project.

02/13/98 President Clinton signed S. 1564, the Holocaust Victims Redress Act, into law as P.L. 105-158.

02/16/98 Two Swiss insurance companies, Winterthur and Baloise Life/Basler Leben, refused to open their archives to the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), the American organization that is investigating insurance policies belonging to Holocaust victims. Both claimed that they are private Swiss companies operating under Swiss laws, and therefore not answerable to foreign entities. Elan Steinberg, director of the WJC, responded to their position as "obscene."

03/01/98 In Cleveland, *The Plain Dealer* reported that museums in Poland and Ukraine dispute the ownership of 24 drawings by German Renaissance painter Albrecht Durer. They claimed that these works were stolen in 1941 and were later sold on the international art market after World War II. The drawings are currently located at the Cleveland Museum of Art and other museums worldwide, including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the Courtauld Institute Galleries in London. In 1952, the Cleveland Museum of Art bought two of the drawings for its collection, "The Dead Christ" and "The Ascension." Museum officials from the Lubomirski Museum in Lvov, Ukraine, and the Ossolinski Library in Wroclaw, Poland, want the drawings returned.

03/03/98 The U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted to send a resolution to the full Senate to approve the ratification of NATO expansion to include Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. Senators Arlen Specter and Robert Torricelli vowed to introduce a resolution that would postpone the vote on NATO enlargement until life insurance claims of Holocaust victims were paid by the successor governments of the three former Communist nations. Edward J. Moskal, president of the Polish American Congress, reacted to this proposed resolution by stating, "The payment of life insurance claims is something that should be investigated and settled, but should not be used, in a malicious way, as a reason for stopping these nations from joining NATO, which is a matter of their security and ours."

03/04/98 Crédit Suisse Group, a Swiss bank, reached an undisclosed settlement with Estelle Sapir of Queens, New York, in return for her withdrawal from a class action suit filed in October 1996. According to a Swiss television report, the settlement was estimated at \$500,000. Ms. Sapir was one of the original litigants in a class action suit that now has more than 10,000 complainants.

03/04/98 A class-action lawsuit was filed in federal court in Newark, New Jersey, against Ford Werke, a German subsidiary of Ford Motor Company. The lawsuit alleged that Ford Werke, based in Cologne, Germany, made trucks for the German army during World War II and profited from forced civilian laborers from Belgium, Russia, Italy, and Ukraine. The lawsuit named one plaintiff, Elsa Iwanowa of Antwerp, Belgium, who claimed that she was taken from her home in Rostov, Russia, and forced to work in the Cologne factory with 2,000 other children from 1943-1945.

03/05/98 The Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, S. 1379, cleared the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill would allow two classes of U.S. archival material to be released to investigators: war crimes information on Nazi persecutions and information on transactions involving stolen assets from Holocaust victims.

06/02/98 The U.S. Department of State released its second historical report, entitled *U.S. and Allied Wartime and Postwar Relations and Negotiations with Argentina, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Turkey on Looted Gold and German External Assets and U.S. Concerns About the Fate of the Wartime Ustasha Treasury*. This report examined Nazi Germany's trade with neutral countries, which helped fuel the Nazi war machine by providing commercial means of exchanging gold for critical war materials. It also looked at war profiteering by these neutral nations, including the United States, during the first 27 months of the war when it was also a neutral nation.

06/04/98 The U.S. House Banking Committee held a hearing on H.R. 3662, the Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998. This hearing was a continuation of an earlier hearing on the traffic of Nazi gold looted during World War II, the theft of Holocaust victims' assets, and belated postwar restitution efforts.

06/19/98 Crédit Suisse, Swiss Bank Corp., and Union Bank of Switzerland offered \$600 million to settle unclaimed dormant account claims. Their offer was rejected by the WJC and other Jewish groups.

06/23/98 President Clinton signed S. 1900, "U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998" into law as P.L. 105-186.

06/29/98 Holocaust survivors sue the Swiss National Bank for allegedly laundering proceeds from looted Nazi gold.

07/15/98 British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announced the beneficiaries of the United Kingdom's £1 million contribution to the "International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution." One-third would go to the Board of Deputies of British Jews for needy survivors in the United Kingdom; and two-thirds would go to the American Joint Distribution Committee through the World Jewish Restitution Organization for projects providing food and medical care to needy survivors in Belarus, Moldova, Russia, and Ukraine.

07/22/98 The U.S. Senate Banking Committee chaired by Senator D'Amato held a hearing on the assets of Holocaust victims. Among those testifying were Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs Stuart Eizenstat; Jean Ziegler, a member of the Swiss Parliament and author of *The Swiss, the Gold, and the Dead*; Carl McCall, Comptroller of the State of New York; Israel Singer, Secretary General of the WJC; and others.

08/07/98 Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus formed an international commission to evaluate the crimes committed by the Nazi and Soviet occupation regimes in Lithuania. The 14-member Commission includes historians, human rights specialists, representatives of international Jewish organizations, and lawyers from Lithuania, Russia, the United States, and Germany.

08/12/98 The largest commercial Swiss banks (Crédit Suisse and the Union Bank of Switzerland), Holocaust survivors, and Jewish groups reached a \$1.25 billion settlement of wartime assets. This action halted an economic boycott against Swiss banks, institutions, and companies. The \$20 billion class action lawsuit in federal district court in Brooklyn brought against these two commercial banks was dropped, as well as a suit in the Northern District in California. (See CRS Report 98-699, *Holocaust Survivor and Heir Lawsuits to Recover Swiss Bank Deposits* for further details.) This settlement, however, did not resolve a separate lawsuit filed in the Southern District of New York in October 1996 against three major Swiss insurance companies (Crédit Suisse, the Union Bank of Switzerland, and Swiss Bank Corp., also known as the Swiss National Bank).

8/13/98 A “Memorandum of Intent” was signed by five large European insurance companies (Allianz, Generali, Zurich Group, AXA-UAP, and Nordstern), two survivor organizations (the World Jewish Congress and the World Jewish Restitution Organization), and 39 states to establish a process to investigate insurance policies of victims of the Holocaust and to consult with European governments and the insurance industry.

8/14/98 An agreement was reached between Chicago art collector Daniel Searle and the descendants of Dutch victims of the Holocaust, Friedrich and Louise Gutmann, concerning a pastel “Landscape with Smokestacks” by Edgar Degas. Searle will relinquish a half-interest in the painting to the Gutmann heirs and donate his half-interest to the Art Institute of Chicago. The Art Institute will have the work appraised, then buy the other half-interest from the Gutmann heirs. The agreement settled a lawsuit by the Gutmann heirs that was scheduled to go to trial in September 1998.

8/19/98 Assicurazioni Generali, Italy’s largest insurance company, agreed to pay \$100 million to Holocaust survivors and heirs of Holocaust victims for life insurance policies and annuity policies that it refused to honor after the war. The agreement was presented to Judge Michael Mukasey in U.S. District Court in Manhattan.

08/30/98 A 31-page class action lawsuit was filed in Brooklyn, New York, against 12 German companies including Audi, Daimler-Benz, BMW, Krupp, Leica cameras, Siemens, and Volkswagen by the same lawyers who handled the Swiss banking and insurance cases, Edward Fagan in New York and Michael Witt in Munich. They also filed lawsuits against Deutsche Bank and Dresdner Bank, as well as the chemical company, Degussa, for using slave laborers and from profiting from the war.

08/31/98 A separate lawsuit was filed in Newark, New Jersey, against Volkswagen only by former slave laborers in their Nazi-run factories.

09/09/98 The Tripartite Gold Commission (TGC) disbanded after 52 years. The TGC was created by the victorious Allied forces of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to return gold seized by Nazi Germany from the central banks of occupied countries. An estimated \$60 million to \$70 million has been promised by the TGC to the fund, known as the “Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution,” created during the London Nazi Gold Conference in December 1997. Of the original 370 tons of foreign monetary reserves that the Allies recovered in 1945, only

\$300,000 belonging to the former Yugoslavia remains on deposit in the Bank of England until Yugoslavia's successor states agree on its distribution. The United States pledged \$25 million, Britain \$1.7 million, and France \$3.45 million to this fund.

09/11/98 Volkswagen announced a \$12 million private relief fund to compensate World War II slave laborers. It was the first time a German company acknowledged its "moral and legal responsibility" to compensate Nazi-era slave laborers. The fund will be supervised by a prominent international board, including former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, and will decide how the money will be disbursed.

09/23/98 Following Volkswagen's lead, Siemens, a German electronics firm, announced a \$12 million fund to compensate former slave laborers that were forced to work for the firm by the Nazis during World War II. Siemens estimated that between 10,000 to 20,000 slave laborers worked in its wartime factories.

10/15/98 The Austrian government announced the establishment of a commission of historians to study all aspects of the country's restitution efforts to victims of the Holocaust. The commission will be funded by Parliament and consisting of six members under the leadership of Clemens Jabloner, President of Austria's High Administrative Court.

10/15/98 Two Austrian companies (auto engineering firm Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG and steelmaker Voest) and three German firms (construction companies Phillip Holzmann AG, Dyckerhoff AG, and Leonhard-Moll AG) were named in two separate class-action lawsuits in New York. These companies are accused of using and profiteering from slave laborers at their factories during World War II. The lawsuit against the two Austrian firms is the first of its kind targeting Austria's wartime industry.

10/21/98 The first meeting of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) was held in New York. Former U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger was appointed chairman of the ICHEIC, and five working groups were established.

11/30-12/3/98 The Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets was hosted by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum to discuss the various issues relating to Holocaust-era assets. Attending were representatives of 44 nations and 13 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who discussed restitution practices and policies relating to insurance claims, looted works of art, and communal property. Guidelines for the restitution of works of art looted by the Nazis were established and known as the "Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art." Some of the recommendations included: the opening of all records and archives where information may be found; the identification of looted works of art; creation of a central registry for such information; and a "just and fair" process by which claimants may come forward seeking lost works of art and cultural objects.

12/04/98 A "Symposium on Records and Research Relating to Holocaust-Era Assets" was held at the U.S. National Archives (Archives II) in College Park, Maryland. This symposium was in conjunction with the Washington Conference on

Holocaust-Era Assets, and Stuart Eizenstat, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs at the Department of State, gave the opening address. The Symposium examined how the documents located in the National Archives were being used by the U.S. government and private researchers to locate documents pertaining to wartime assets.

For complete detail of all Holocaust-era legislation introduced and passed during the 105th Congress (1997-1998), refer to CRS Report 98-903, *Holocaust-Related Legislation of the 105th Congress*.

1999

01/06/99 U.S. Representative Eliot Engels introduced H.R. 126, the Holocaust Victims Insurance Act, a bill to provide for the recovery of insurance issued for victims of the Holocaust. This bill was then referred to the House Committee on Commerce. This was the first bill introduced relating to Holocaust-era assets in the 106th Congress.

01/06/99 U.S. Representative Louise Slaughter introduced H.R.271, Justice for Holocaust Survivors Act. This bill would allow Holocaust survivors who are currently U.S. citizens, but who were not U.S. citizens during the Holocaust and who have been denied reparations by the German government in the past, to sue the German government in the United States to claim restitution for their incarceration in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. This bill was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

01/11/99 President Clinton announced the creation of a presidential working group to locate, inventory, and quickly make public all classified records held by the United States relating to Nazi war criminals. The Nazi War Criminal Records Interagency Working Group will recommend documents for declassification at the National Archives, according to Executive Order 13110 and P.L. 105-246.

01/19/99 U.S. Representative David McIntosh introduced H.R. 390, a bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to exclude from gross income amounts received for settlement of certain claims of Holocaust survivors. This bill was then referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

01/19/99 H.R. 126, Holocaust Victims Insurance Act, was referred to the House Committee on Commerce, Subcommittee on Finance and Hazardous Materials.

01/26/99 The Contact Bureau on Looted Art opened officially in Bern, Switzerland. Its scope of activity includes processing inquiries which affect the Swiss federal collections as well as offering information and support on general questions concerning looted art in Switzerland and research on looted art.

02/16/99 German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced the creation of a fund, projected to amount to \$3.5 billion to \$4.6 billion and financed by 12 German companies, to compensate victims of the Nazis during World War II. The creation of the “Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future” fund, according to remarks by

Chancellor Schroeder, was “to counter lawsuits, particularly class action suits, and to remove the basis of the campaign being led against German industry and our country.” Payments are expected to start by September 1, 1999. The 12 companies contributing to this fund are: Allianz insurance, BASF, Bayer, BMW, Daimler-Chrysler (formerly Daimler-Benz), Degussa, Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, Hoechst, Krupp, Siemens, and Volkswagen. This initial list of 12 companies includes automakers, banks, chemical production, insurance, and other German industrial sectors accused of profiting from forced/slave labor during World War II.

02/25/99 H.R. 271, Justice for Holocaust Survivors Act, was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Immigration and Claims.

03/05/99 Five Holocaust survivors forced to help build a factory for German airplanes during World War II filed a lawsuit in Los Angeles Superior Court. It is the first lawsuit filed in California seeking compensation for victims of Nazi slave labor. The lawsuit was filed against Philip Holtzman AG, a multibillion-dollar German construction company that does considerable business in the United States.

03/25/99 U.S. Representative Jerry Weller introduced H.R. 1292, a bill to provide that no federal income tax shall be imposed on amounts received by Holocaust victims or their heirs.

03/25/99 Former slave laborers under the Nazis, wearing yellow Stars of David and their old concentration camp numbers, protested outside an IG Farben shareholders’ meeting in Frankfurt, Germany. They were protesting a plan by the German government to establish an industry wide-fund for all those forced to work for the Third Reich. Instead, the plaintiffs in the U.S.-based lawsuits demanded direct payments from the German companies for which they worked during the war and an apology. The German government fund is designed to dismiss the growing number of class action lawsuits against German companies that profited by using slave labor during the war years.

03/27/99 The accounting firm of Coopers & Lybrand requested that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) provide them with genealogical records that could help identify over 300,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust who may have established bank accounts in Switzerland. Coopers & Lybrand asked for the records to further their work with the Volcker Commission, which is still auditing Swiss bank accounts for unclaimed accounts held by Holocaust victims and heirs.

03/30/99 The U.S. Department of State announced plans to give \$4 million to an international relief fund that will assist needy survivors of Nazi persecution with food, medicine, and clothing in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Many of these Holocaust survivors were “double victims” of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. This international relief fund, known as the Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution, was created during the London Nazi Gold Conference in December 1997. Overall, the United States has pledged \$25 million over three years (P.L. 105-158, sec.103), and 17 other nations have pledged more than \$61 million.

03/30/99 The French Banking Association (AFB) announced that the French Foreign Ministry requested that the U.S. District Court for Eastern New York dismiss two

lawsuits by Holocaust survivors against French banks in the United States on the grounds that these lawsuits disrupt and interfere with current efforts by the French government to compensate victims of the Holocaust in France. The French banks being pursued by victims in the United States are: Societ  G n ral; Banque Paribas; the French subsidiary of Barclay's Bank; Caisse Nationale de Cr dit Agricole; the CNCA unit, Cr dit Agricole Indosuez; Cr dit Lyonnais; Banque National de Paris; Cr dit Commercial de France; Banque Fran aise du Commerce Ext rieur, and Banque Worms Capital Corp.

03/31/99 A spokesman at the U.S. Department of State said that they would not intervene in U.S. courts on behalf of the French government and would not intervene in any private litigation.

03/31/99 A class action complaint was filed in San Francisco Superior Court by the Simon Wiesenthal Center, California Governor Gray Davis, and representatives of Holocaust survivors who reside in California against German and American companies that used slave labor and "Aryanized" Jewish assets during the Holocaust. The companies named in the lawsuit are Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Bank, Commerzbank AG, Deutsche Lufthansa, VIAG, Ford Motor Company, and General Motors Corp.

03/31/99 The Swiss Finance Ministry set up a timetable for potential sales of excess Swiss gold reserves. If approved by public referendum in March 2000, a portion of the sale of the surplus gold reserves will be used for the Swiss Solidarity Fund.

03/31/99 The Swiss Foreign Ministry announced that it would disband the Special Task Force on Holocaust Issues created in October 1996 and headed by Special Ambassador Thomas Borer. Ambassador Borer led Swiss efforts to deal with international criticism that Switzerland served as a wartime financial center with close commercial ties to Nazi Germany.

04/13/99 U.S. Senator Spencer Abraham introduced S. 779, a bill to provide that no federal income tax shall be imposed on amounts received by Holocaust victims of their heirs.

04/23/99 The Swiss Supreme Court called for an investigation into allegations by Joseph Spring, a Jewish refugee during World War II, whom Swiss border guards handed over to the Nazis in 1943. Mr. Spring currently resides in Australia and is requesting \$67,000 in compensation from the Swiss government for being twice turned away at the French-Swiss border, and, on his second attempt, being turned over to the Germans and sent to Auschwitz, where he survived the war. In its decision, the high court ruled against the government, which had said that Spring's claim had no legal basis.

04/29/99 The French government returned an oil painting by Claude Monet, "Nymphaes, 1904" (Water Lilies, 1904) to the heirs of its French-Jewish owner, Paul Rosenberg. Rosenberg was an art dealer and collector, and in 1940 the Germans confiscated his art collection and sent it to Germany. Although the painting was returned to France in 1949, it was not identified as part of the Rosenberg collection until it appeared in a show, "Monet in the 20th Century," at the Museum of Fine Arts

in Boston in the fall of 1998. French Culture Minister Catherine Trautmann presided over the ceremony and handed the painting back to Rosenberg's daughter-in-law, Elaine, and granddaughter, Elizabeth Clark.

04/30/99 At a conference held at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, California's top officials and legislators led by Governor Gray Davis and Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush announced the formation of the "California Holocaust Insurance Alliance" consisting of 25 organizations and individuals calling for the suspension of 64 insurance companies practicing in California that have failed to honor Holocaust-era claims.

05/05/99 Anne Gazeau-Secret, the French Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, announced that the French government acknowledged it had yet to fulfill its pledge from June 1998 to contribute \$3.23 million to needy victims of the Holocaust since it needed additional time to consult with Jewish groups in France on how the funds should be distributed.

05/06/99 The *Washington Post* reported on a government commission in Buenos Aires, the Argentine Committee of Inquiry into Nazi Activities, uncovering evidence in three letters written in the 1950s during the dictatorship of Juan Peron that indicated that the Argentine Central Bank served as a temporary repository for Nazi gold after the fall of the Third Reich.

05/12/99 The U.S. Department of State hosted an international conference of government, business, and private groups on reparations for victims of forced or slave labor by the Nazi regime during World War II. Stuart Eizenstat, Under Secretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs, and Bodo Hombach, chief of staff for German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, presided at the gathering. Foreign delegations from Germany, Belarus, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Israel, Poland, and Russia attended. Also in attendance were officials and lawyers for the 16 German companies that have pledged to set up a fund for these forced/slave laborers by September 1, 1999, the 60th anniversary of the start of World War II. Under Secretary Eizenstat announced the creation of two working groups, one to set eligibility rules for payments from the fund and the other to deal with ways to ensure legal closure for the 16 major German companies involved.

05/13/99 U.S. Representative Bob Franks introduced H.R.1788, Nazi Benefits Termination Act of 1999, a bill to deny Federal public benefits to individuals who participated in Nazi persecution.

05/15/99 A \$3 billion lawsuit was filed in Frankfurt, Germany, on behalf of 22,000 Poles who were forced into Nazi slave labor. The lawsuit was filed against Dresdner Bank for its wartime role in financing Nazi war production.

05/23/99 The Jewish Claims Conference and the World Jewish Congress are opposing a \$40 million settlement of a lawsuit against two Austrian banks, Bank Austria and its subsidiary, Creditanstalt. At issue is a proposed agreement by the banks to make restitution of funds lost by Jewish depositors beginning in 1938, when Austria came under the control of Nazi Germany.

05/31/99 The Volcker Commission announced its completion of a 3-year probe of Holocaust-era assets in Swiss banks. A final report from the commission is expected sometime in the Fall 1999.

06/10/99 Industry representatives of 16 German companies announced their participation in the creation of a compensation fund in an effort to settle slave labor lawsuits against the following companies that profited from Nazi-era slave labor: Allianz, BASF, Bayer, BMW, Commerzbank, Daimler Chrysler (settling on behalf of Daimler-Benz), Deutsche Bank, Degussa-Huels, Deutz, Dresdner Bank, Thyssen-Krupp, Hoechst, RAG, Siemens, Volkswagen, and Veba. Called the "Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future" fund, it will be administered with the help of the German government and estimated at \$1.7 billion. Lump-sum payments would be based on need and on 6-months or longer of slave labor service. Attorneys representing victims in the class action lawsuits against these companies charge that the total fund is inadequate and that 6 months or longer of forced/slave labor was the exception rather than the rule since many laborers lasted barely 3 months under such brutal conditions. The aim of these German companies in setting up this fund is to protect them from any future claims.

06/16/99 The Seattle Museum of Art announced that it is returning a \$2-million painting, "Odalisque" (1928) by Henri Matisse, to the heirs of Paul Rosenberg, a prominent Jewish art dealer in Paris, whose collection was confiscated by the Nazis during World War II. This decision was the first by an American art museum to return a work of stolen art after an investigation by the Holocaust Art Restitution Project (HARP), which discovered that the painting had been stolen from Rosenberg's vault in 1941 and had never been recovered by its original owner.

06/18/99 A group of Polish Holocaust survivors filed a class action lawsuit against Poland in the U.S. District Court in Brooklyn, New York. The lawsuit seeks to recover property and assets that were illegally seized by the Nazis during World War II and later by the Polish government after the war.

06/21/99 U.S. Senator Robert Torricelli introduced S. 1249, the Nazi Benefits Termination Act of 1999, a bill to deny Federal public benefits to individuals who participated in Nazi persecution. S. 1249 was then read twice and referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee.

06/21/99 The U.S. State Department confirmed that the German government wired \$18 million to the U.S. Treasury Department for distribution to more than 200 Americans who survived Nazi-run concentration camps during World War II. These recipients were American citizens who, at the time of their incarceration, worked in slave labor camps, or were American soldiers who were prisoners of war and held in recognized concentration camps. The exact number of claimants was not disclosed by the State Department nor the exact amount each claimant would receive.

06/22/99 Melvyn Weiss, a U.S. attorney representing victims of Nazi-era slave labor in one of three class-action lawsuits, expressed doubt that an agreement would be reached by September 1, 1999, on a compensation fund set up by 16 German companies charged with profiting from slave labor during World War II. Weiss met with lawyers representing the 16 companies, German Chancellery Minister Bodo

Hombach, and U.S. Undersecretary of State for Economic, Business, and Agricultural Affairs Eizenstat in Bonn, Germany.

06/23/99 Representatives from five European insurance companies (Assicurazioni Generali of Italy, Allianz of Germany, AXA of France, Winterthur and Zurich of Switzerland) met in Jerusalem to negotiate a settlement for Holocaust-era claims. These companies are members of the International Commission on Holocaust-Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) that is trying to establish procedures on how to identify and pay claims on insurance policies issued to Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

06/30/99 U.S. Representative Rick Lazio introduced H.R.2401, a bill to amend the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998 to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding.

07/04/99 The Portuguese newspaper *Público* reported that the investigative committee appointed by the Portuguese government in June 1998, and headed by former President Mario Soares, had determined that Portugal did not launder gold looted by the Nazi regime, and therefore is not obligated to pay any compensation. The committee was formed after the release of the second historical report by the U.S. Department of State that stated that the fascist regime of Antonio Salazar had received gold estimated between \$500 million and \$1 billion from Nazi Germany.

07/07/99 The Dutch Welfare Ministry announced that it will pay \$10.45 million to 122 victims of Germany's occupation of the Netherlands during World War II as part of its pledge to return gold and other assets looted by the Nazis to victims of the Holocaust. Over 300 individuals and organizations submitted applications between September 1998 and March 1999. Most of the money is being spread among various Jewish groups to settle individual claims except for 5% of the money, which will be set aside for other victims of Nazi persecution in the Netherlands, including homosexuals, Roma (Gypsies), and Jehovah's Witnesses.

07/07/99 Italian insurance company Generali and German insurance giant Allianz approved an initial payment to seven heirs of insured Holocaust victims. These insurance policies were issued by Generali and by Riunione Adriatica, the Italian subsidiary of Germany's Allianz, prior to the outbreak of World War II. The amount of the payment was not disclosed pending further examination.

07/16/99 The first Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the International Fund for Needy Victims of Nazi Persecution was held in the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London. This first AGM was held one year after the first payment from the Fund. Its purpose was to review progress with the Fund and to share the experiences of those using it.

07/29/99 U.S. Senator William Roth for Senator Abraham introduced S.Amdt. 1411, an amendment to S. 1429, to provide that no federal income tax shall be imposed on amounts received, and lands recovered, by Holocaust victims or their heirs. The amendment was agreed to in Senate by unanimous consent.

08/05/99 U.S. Representative Frank Pallone, Jr. introduced H.R. 2781, a bill to amend the International Claims Act of 1949 to provide for the settlement of claims relating to American victims of National Socialist Persecution.

08/05/99 U.S. Senator Gordon Smith introduced S. 1520, the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999, a bill to amend the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Act of 1998 to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding.

09/14/99 H.R.1788, Nazi Benefits Termination Act of 1999, was reported to the House of Representatives from the Committee on the Judiciary, H.Rept. 106-321 (Part I). *Congressional Record* (CR), p. H8289.

09/14/99 U.S. House Banking Committee held a hearing on issues related to forced labor during World War II; the fate war-era assets of Holocaust victims in French, British and Austrian banks; and the settlement of insurance claims of Holocaust victims and the heirs. Among those testifying at the hearing were Stuart Eizenstat, Deputy Treasury Secretary; a panel of surviving slave laborers; Dr. Israel Miller, president of the Claims Conference, and others.

09/29/99 U.S. Representative Kleczka introduced H. Res. 314, “expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that all parties involved in negotiating the compensation for the Nazi slave and forced labor victims should achieve a settlement that is fair and equitable to all claimants.” It was then referred to the House Committee on International Relations.

10/04/99 The House passed H.R. 2401, U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999, to extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding. The bill was then referred to the Senate Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs Committee on October 5, 1999.

10/06/99 H.R.1788, the Nazi Benefits Termination Act of 1999, was reported to the House from the Committee on Government Reform with amendment, H.Rept. 106-321 (Part II) (CR H9515).

10/6-7/99 Negotiations continued between representatives for the surviving slave and forced laborers; representatives of German industries; and the German government for 2 days in Washington, D.C. The U.S. and German governments continued to mediate the discussion. Some agreement was reached regarding the categories for slave and forced laborers. However, there is still a major disagreement over the amount of the German Remembrance Fund and legal closure for the German companies from future lawsuits. The German industries offered \$3.3 billion but the survivors were asking for a figure closer to \$20 billion. The German government agreed to pay one-third of the Fund, with the German industries paying two-thirds.

10/14/99 The Presidential Advisory Commission on Holocaust Assets in the United States released its *Progress Report on: The Mystery of the Hungarian “Gold Train.”* This report examines the fate of more than \$200 million (in 1945 prices) of gold, silver, jewelry, furniture, and other valuables stolen by the Nazis from Hungarian Jews and loaded onto a railroad train. This “Gold Train” was intercepted in Austria by

American soldiers during the last days of the war. The report alleged that some of these valuables were then pilfered by U.S. soldiers after the loot was declared “unidentifiable” by senior U.S. army officials while stored in U.S. military warehouses in Austria. The remaining valuables, including over 1,181 paintings, were then transferred to Austria instead of Hungary, which was the country of origin of the gold train. Despite the pleas of the Hungarian government and Hungarian Jewish community, only a very few items were ever returned to their prewar owners.

10/27/99 The Polish American Congress (PAC) announced at a press conference in Washington, D.C., that the PAC and the Polish American Defense Committee served legal papers on October 22, 1999, on behalf of Polish victims of the Holocaust that were excluded from the \$1.25 billion settlement agreement between Swiss banks and victims of the Holocaust. These legal papers are seeking “to enter the class action lawsuits against the Swiss banks and objecting to the terms of the settlement agreement in which the Swiss banks have agreed to pay victims of Nazi Germany.”

11/04/99 U.S. Senator Charles Schumer introduced S. 1856, “A bill to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize Federal district courts to hear civil actions to recover damages or secure relief for certain injuries to persons and property under or resulting from the Nazi government of Germany.” It was referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary.

11/08/99 U.S. Representative Jerry Nadler introduced H.R. 3254, “to amend title 28 of the United States Code to authorize Federal district courts to hear civil actions to recover damages or secure relief for certain injuries to persons and property under or resulting from the Nazi government of Germany.” It was referred to the House Committee on the Judiciary.

11/19/99 U.S. Representative Gary Ackerman introduced H.R. 3511, “to prohibit deductions under the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 for payments to Holocaust survivors under certain settlements.” It was referred to the House Committee on Ways and Means.

12/06/99 The Volcker Commission announced the release of its report on the Commission’s 3-year investigation of dormant Swiss bank accounts that were believed to contain those of Holocaust victims. According to the report, over 54,000 accounts were linked to victims of Nazi persecution. Of these accounts, 20,000 were still in existence, while 34,000 accounts were closed by Swiss banks. The report revealed no systematic attempt by the Swiss banks to bilk Holocaust survivors or their heirs from their rightful property. However, the report was critical of the Swiss banks’ handling of Holocaust-era funds, which showed “a lack of diligence” and were “too often grossly insensitive to the special condition of the Holocaust.”

12/07/99 The American Jewish Committee (AJC) released its list of 257 German companies that used forced and slave labor during the war. This list (Part I) is available at the AJC Web site at [<http://www.ajc.org/pre/germanylist.asp>].

12/09/99 The President signed H.R. 2401, the U.S. Holocaust Assets Commission Extension Act of 1999, as Public Law 106-155. This act will extend the period by which the final report is due and to authorize additional funding.

12/10/99 The Independent Commission of Experts in Switzerland—Second World War (a.k.a. the Bergier Commission) released its 350-page report, *Switzerland and Refugees in the Nazi Era*. According to this report, Swiss authorities knew by the summer of 1942 at the latest that Jews were being liquidated in Nazi Germany and still refused entry to more than 24,000 Jewish refugees at the Swiss border.

12/14/99 After a series of protracted negotiations, a \$5 billion settlement (10 billion DM) was finally announced between surviving forced and slave laborers, German industries, and the German government. Over 60 German companies pledged to contribute half of the total of the German Remembrance Fund. The total amount is capped at \$5 billion and would cover all World War II-era injuries by German companies including forced and slave labor, insurance, medical experiments, and Aryanized property claims.

12/17/99 The \$5 billion settlement was officially signed in Berlin, Germany. At the historic signing were representatives for the surviving laborers, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, German government mediator Otto Lambsdorff, and U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat. Details regarding payment to survivors were still being negotiated and the German parliament must approve funding for the government's share of the fund. Additional German companies are expected to contribute to the fund.

12/23/99 The American Jewish Committee released a list of German companies that announced their participation in the German Compensation Fund. They are: Agfa (owned by Bayer); Agfa-Gaevert (Belgian owned); Allianz, Bahlsen; BASF; Bayer; Beiersdorff AG; BMW; Bosch; Brandt; Buderus; Carl Zeis Foundation (all subsidiaries included); Commerzbank; Consumer Electronic AG; Continental; DaimlerChrysler; Degussa-Huls; Deutsche Bank; Deutsche Telekom; Deutz; Dillinger Huettenwerke; Dresdner Bank; Felten and Guillaume; Ford; Gemeinde Buedelsdorf (Schleswig-Holstein); Gerrisheimer Glasshettnerwerke; Heraus; Henkel & Cie; Hoechst; Kloeckner AG; Kloeckner Werke (owned by VIAG); Knoll AG (owned by BASF); Lufthansa; MAN; Mannesman; Merck KG; Omnia Moebelwerke; P. Holzmann; Poppe Gummi; Porsche; Ruhrgas; RWE; Schering; Schwartau; Siemens; Stadtwerke Duesseldorf; Steinbeiss; Taming; Thyssenkrup; Veba; Veritas; Gelnhausen Vorwerk & Sohn; Volkswagen; Wieland; Ulm; Zahnradfabrik; and Zwilling J.J. Henckels AG. For the latest update of German companies that have pledged support, scroll down and click on "View List of German Companies Participating in Compensation Fund" at the AJC Web site: [<http://www.ajc.org/pre/germanylist.asp>].

12/30/99 The House International Relations Committee (HIRC) released a study by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) on Holocaust-era assets at the request of Chairman Benjamin Gilman. The study includes: an overview of two recent major international conferences on Holocaust-era assets; a review of two major Holocaust-related U.S. laws; and a review of the issues connected with Holocaust victims' accounts in Swiss banks, Holocaust victims' insurance claims, looted art and books, filing Holocaust-era claims forms, and organizations assisting with restitution

claims. The study also includes a survey of 31 countries and legislation introduced in the 106th Congress on Holocaust-era assets. The study is available at the HIRC Web site at: [http://www.house.gov/international_relations/crs/holocaustrpt.htm].

2000

01/21-22/00 The International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) held a meeting in Washington, D.C., to discuss processing Holocaust-era claims beginning January 31, 2000. The deadline for filing is January 31, 2002. Information on filing claims can be found on the Commission's Web page at [<http://www.icheic.org/eng/claims.html>].

01/27/00 The AJC released its second list of an additional 150 German firms that used forced and slave labor during the Nazi era. The cumulative number of German companies identified by the AJC on both lists is now over 400. This second list is available from their Web site at [<http://www.ajc.org/pre/germanylist.asp>]; scroll down and click on "View PART II & III of the AJC list of companies."

02/01/00 A new round of talks on slave and forced labor negotiations was held in Washington, D.C., on how to divide the \$5 billion compensation fund offered by the German government and German companies among the surviving forced and slave laborers. No decision was reached and discussions are scheduled to continue later this month in Berlin.

02/9-10/00 The House Banking Committee held a two-day hearing on Holocaust Victims' Assets and covered issues such as German forced and slave labor, dormant accounts in Swiss banks, unpaid insurance claims, and stolen art objects.

02/17/00 Negotiations continued in Berlin, Germany, between the representatives of Nazi-era forced laborers and German officials over how to divide the \$5 billion compensation fund without a resolution.

02/23/00 The Volcker Commission (a.k.a. "Independent Committee of Eminent Persons") held its last meeting in Zurich, and has made a recommendation to the Swiss Federal Banking Commission to publish the list of "over 26,000 bank accounts" that it identified as being possibly connected to victims of the war.

02/29/00 British museum directors published a list of 350 art treasures in 10 major museums and galleries that they believe were stolen by the Nazis during the second World War. Their report, *Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II Period: First Progress Report on Provenance Research for the Period 1933-1945*, is available at the National Museum Director's Conference (NMDC) Web site at [<http://www.nationalmuseums.org.uk/spoliation.html>]. Among the famous works on the list are Picasso's "Fruit Dish, Bottle, and Violin" and Renoir's "A Nymph by a Stream," both in the National Gallery in London.

03/01/00 A proposal by Israeli Holocaust and art experts would allow museums, like those recently identified in the United Kingdom, to exhibit and keep works of art identified as works stolen by the Nazis as long as the items displayed have a label

explaining how they were stolen. According to Avner Shalev, director of Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial, "the label would say that the original ownership was in the hands of a Jew murdered during the Holocaust. It would give a moral dimension to the whole thing, even though the paintings still remain." A recent example is "Boulevard Montmartre: Spring" by Camille Pissaro in the Israel Museum, which now has a label citing the original owner as Max Silberberg, and explains that the Nazis stole it from him during the war. Museum officials hope this proposal is adopted by other museums worldwide.

04/04/00 The names of 19,000 insurance policy owners dating from the Nazi-era were announced by the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC), and is available on its Web site at [<http://www.icheic.org>] by clicking on "Search the Lists." These lists are available in several languages and are intended to let policy owners and their heirs claim unpaid policies from the following insurance companies: Allianz, Axa, Generali, Winterthur, and Zurich.

04/10/00 The German government announced that it would list works of art stolen during the Nazi-era on the Lost Art Internet Database, at [<http://www.lostart.de>]. This Web site is available in German, English, and Russian, and is a joint project of the Federal Government of Germany and its states. It registers "cultural goods which were transported or stolen because of persecution, especially of Jewish citizens, as a result of World War II or as a result of National Socialism."

05/08/00 The British Bankers' Association published a list of 13,000 names of people who may have funds in bank accounts that remain unclaimed since being frozen by the British government during the war years. This list is available on the Web site, Restore UK, at [<http://www.restoreuk.org.uk>].

05/17/00 Austria announced plans for its Reconciliation Fund that will allow one-time payments to slave laborers, many of them Jews, who worked in Nazi concentration camps, and forced laborers who worked in factories and agriculture in Austria. The fund total is over \$400 million. Slave laborers will be eligible for one-time payments of \$6,884, while forced laborers will be eligible for \$2,295 each, and forced agricultural workers will receive \$1,311 each. An estimated 150,000 survivors could benefit from this fund, but it must be approved by the Austrian parliament. Austrian companies are expected to contribute to this fund, which is similar to the fund created in Germany.

05/23/00 An agreement was reached in Berlin among the participants in the forced and slave labor negotiations regarding the allocation plan for the \$5 billion German foundation.

05/23/00 The Swiss government apologized and agreed to pay an elderly Jewish brother and sister, Charles and Sabine Sonabend, \$118,000 (200,000 Swiss francs) in a first-of-its-kind settlement of their lawsuit against the country for causing the death of their parents. The Sonabends were deported from Switzerland in 1942, and both their parents were sent to Auschwitz, where they later died.

05/25/00 Governor George Pataki signed legislation in Albany, New York, that would allow artwork on display in museums and galleries to be seized by state

authorities as part of a criminal investigation. This legislation is intended to aid in the recovery of art stolen during World War II that was later passed on to private collectors and museums.

06/23/00 The Czech Senate approved a government-proposed law to return Jewish property confiscated from September 29, 1938, to May 8, 1945, to Czech Jews and Jewish organizations. Owners and/or their heirs have until the end of 2002 to file a claim with the Czech government.

07/07/00 Austria's parliament voted unanimously to approve funding for the \$425 million (6 billion Schillings) Reconciliation Fund to compensate Nazi-era forced and slave laborers. Austrian industry will also contribute to the fund, and payment to survivors is expected by the end of the year.

07/14/00 The *Bundesrat* (upper house of the German parliament) passed legislation establishing the German foundation to compensate forced and slave laborers. A week earlier the *Bundestag* (lower house) passed this legislation that will allow the German government to finance \$2.5 billion, which is half the \$5 billion Remembrance fund.

07/17/00 The signing of the Concluding Joint Statement and Executive Agreement by representatives of the United States, Germany, Israel, and several East European nations transpired in Berlin, establishing the \$5-billion German foundation, "Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Future" after nearly 2 years of intense negotiations. The first draft of this agreement was signed in December 1999. Under the terms of this final agreement, surviving forced laborers will receive \$2,500 each for the hardships they endured, while surviving slave laborers will receive \$7,500 each. The first payments to the surviving victims of forced and slave labor are expected later this year after the 60 court cases pending in the United States are dismissed, according to U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat, who led the U.S. delegation. Additionally, a cap was set at \$50 million for legal fees to ensure that the majority of the money goes to the victims and not their lawyers.

07/19/00 U.S. District Judge Michael Mukasey ruled in Manhattan that the U.S. government cannot force Austria's Leopold Museum to forfeit the painting, "Portrait of Wally," by Egon Schiele that was stolen from Lea Bondi Jaray, an Austrian Jew, by the Nazis during the Second World War. Judge Mukasey dismissed the federal government's lawsuit that claimed the painting was looted property, since the painting was recovered by U.S. armed forces before the museum bought it. It is not certain whether federal prosecutors would appeal the decision.

07/26/00 In Federal District Court in Brooklyn, U.S. District Judge Edward R. Korman approved the \$1.25-billion settlement between Swiss banks and more than a half-million plaintiffs who alleged that the banks kept deposits made by victims of the Holocaust. This case began nearly 3 years ago after a series of class-action lawsuits were filed in Brooklyn by Jewish-Americans who had deposited money in Swiss accounts during the era of the Second World War. Judge Korman's ruling required that a draft of the distribution plan, which could compensate approximately 600,000 claimants, be made in the next 30 days.