

HOLOCAUST ERA ASSETS CONFERENCE Prague, June 2009

Providing Sustainable Funding for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research

*Presented by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany
(Claims Conference)*

Funding for Holocaust education, remembrance and research comes from a variety of sources. The budgets of ministries of education, local school systems, and universities generally pay for the salaries of teachers and professors. Ministries of culture and other relevant government authorities often pay for the maintenance of memorials and museums. Private donations by individuals and families play a great role. But an important additional source of funding for educational and scholarly publications, teacher training, archives, films, visits to memorial sites, and remembrance activities has come over the years - particularly since the 1990's - from collective claims negotiated with industry and government, as well as from the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish assets.

The first and overwhelming priority in the use of monies from collective claims and the recovery of heirless and unclaimed assets has always been the social welfare of Holocaust victims.

But there has always been a sense that at least a small part of such funds should be used for Holocaust education, remembrance and research. Some of the original funds collected beginning in 1947 was utilized for education programs. The 1952 Luxembourg Agreements increased the amount of available funds, and these funds provided by West Germany to the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) were also partly used to support cultural and educational programs, largely with the aim of training communal leaders for surviving European Jewry.¹ "With aid from the Claims Conference in its first dozen years, victims of the Nazis produced more than 400 books written in a dozen languages, including general and religious literature, children's stories, Jewish social studies, and textbooks....The Claims Conference, also committed to documenting what was then known as the 'Jewish Catastrophe' (the word Holocaust was not yet in vogue), also gave an important allocation to help found Yad Vashem in Jerusalem."² Support was given during the 1950's and early 1960's for cultural and educational programs in 30 countries.

¹ Henry, Marilyn. "50 years of Holocaust Compensation". Singer, David. Grossman, Lawrence. *American Jewish Year Book. The Annual Record of Jewish Civilization*, Vol.102 (2002), pp. 43-46

² Ibid., p.47

When some thirty years later in the mid-1990's property settlements began to substantially increase the funds available to institutions assisting Holocaust victims, the sense in all instances was that such funds should at least to some small extent also go to Holocaust education, remembrance and research. Thus, when the Claims Conference began receiving proceeds from the sales of unclaimed Jewish property that it recovered in the former East Germany, the Board of Directors decided to allocate a portion of the funds toward research, documentation, and education of the Shoah. Similar decisions have been made by the various organizations and persons involved in almost all the collective claims and property settlements over the past decade. Some of the monies from the slave labor fund were designated for education, and in the French banks settlement a portion of the settlement was utilized for the memory of the Shoah.³

The principal reasons have been a sense of obligation to preserve the memory of the six million killed, in order that the world does not forget both how they lived and how they died, and a desire to help ensure that future generations learn of the Holocaust. In part the motivation has been to see a measure of justice also for the dead. Thus, in the Swiss Banks Settlement, the sense was that no matter how well the settlement funds were apportioned and distributed, there would nonetheless still be persons who should have benefited but for a variety of reasons - including many of them having passed away - would not. The Court therefore established the Victim List Project to assemble and make available all the names of the victims of the Nazis and their allies and thus to ensure that at least the names of all would be remembered.

Similarly noted on the website of the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC): "All organizations that have a mandate to allocate humanitarian funds received from restitution programs struggle with the proper balance of funding welfare programs for needy Nazi victims versus programs which goals are Holocaust remembrance, education or strengthening Jewish identity through exposure to the rich history and tradition of the Jewish culture, particularly that of the European Jews in the early 1900s... Most of the funds available for humanitarian purposes, other than the funds used to pay humanitarian claims awards, were designated to benefit needy Holocaust victims worldwide. However, it was ICHEIC's view that allocating some amount of humanitarian funds to support the strengthening of Jewish culture and heritage in recognition that the Nazis attempted to eradicate Jewish culture as well as the Jewish people, was a legitimate way of memorializing those Holocaust victims who did not survive".⁴

At the present time, the principal funds for Holocaust education, research and remembrance that result from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and from the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish property are as follows, along with their respective websites:

- Claims Conference: Rabbi Israel Miller Fund for Shoah Research, Education, and Documentation, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference). <http://www.claimscon.org>

³ Bazylar, Michael. *Holocaust Justice: The Battle for Restitution in America's Courts*. New York: New York University Press, 2003, pp.278-279.

⁴ <http://www.icheic.org>, last accessed June 16, 2009

- Austria: Nationalfonds der Republik Österreich für Opfer des Nationalsozialismus <http://www.nationalfonds.org>
- Belgium: Fondation du Judaïsme de Belgique <http://www.fjb-sjb.be/fr>
- Czech Republic: Nadační fond obětem holocaustu <http://www.fondholocaust.cz>
- France: Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, <http://www.fondationshoah.org>
- Germany: Stiftung "Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" <http://www.stiftung-evz.de/>
- Macedonia: The Jewish Holocaust Fund in Macedonia
- Netherlands: Stichting Collectieve Maror-gelden Nederland (COM) <http://www.maror.nl>
- Norway: Fund established by the Government of Norway and the Jewish Communities of Norway http://www.hlsenteret.no/Om_HL-senteret/301
- Slovakia: Fund established by the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Central Union of Jewish Communities in the Slovak Republic www.holocaustslovakia.sk

Others include, but are not limited to, the International Commission on Holocaust Era Insurance Claims (ICHEIC) www.icheic.org; the Victim List Project of the Swiss Banks Settlement; and the Hungarian Gold Train Settlement www.hungariangoldtrain.org.

What has the impact been of this partial use of funds from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and from the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish property on Holocaust education, remembrance, and research?

First and most importantly, there has been enormous progress in many aspects of Holocaust education, remembrance and research in the last decade partly as a direct result of these funds. Review of that progress is being done by others at the Prague Conference, but just a cursory glance at the listings on the websites above of the many projects assisted makes clear how much has been accomplished in recent years with this support. Many – indeed, perhaps most – of these projects have been directly beneficial to Holocaust victims as well as to educators and researchers, such as the enormous work of Yad Vashem, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Mémorial de la Shoah and others in opening archives and making them accessible that has been accomplished with the support of the Claims Conference, the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah, the Victim List Project of the Swiss Banks Settlement, and others.

Secondly, since many of the settlements have been national in character, programs in Holocaust education, remembrance, and research within given relevant countries have benefited in particular. Thus funds from the Czech settlement have been utilized for programs and institutions within the Czech Republic. Funds from the Austrian, Belgian, French, and Norwegian settlements, as well as from the German slave labor settlement, have mostly been allocated for programs and institutions within the respective countries, but grants have also been made to programs and institutions abroad.

Thirdly, some of the settlements have focused on support for a particular institution. Thus, the Claims Conference is one of three major founders of Yad Vashem (along with the Government of Israel, and the Friends of Yad Vashem). Approximately 80% of the budget of the Mémorial de la Shoah in 2007 came from the Fondation pour la Mémoire de la Shoah.⁵ The Center for Studies of Holocaust and Religious Minorities in Oslo is financed from part of the settlement worked out between the Norwegian State and the Jewish Communities.⁶

However, it should be noted that, as important as they are, these funds constitute only a small part of the totality of financing of Holocaust education, remembrance and research throughout the world.

The total annual budgets of institutions listed in the Directory of Organizations of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (<http://www.holocausttaskforce.org>) that applied for grants from the Claims Conference in 2004 and 2009 were examined. In both years, the total of Claims Conference grants made to those institutions equaled no more than approximately 5% of those organizations' combined total budgets.

It seems likely that this percentage is characteristic of the contribution of all settlements taken together to the financing of the field as a whole worldwide. Obviously the proportions vary greatly for individual institutions and from year to year as well as for different settlement funds. But if all the total annual budgets of institutions in Holocaust education, remembrance and research were to be compared to the total amount of funding coming from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and from the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish properties, the proportion would likely be the same as it is for applicants to the Claims Conference. In other words, perhaps no more than about 5% of the funding of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research worldwide presently comes from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish properties.

General Observations and Recommendations for the Future

1. Funds from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish properties are needed first and foremost for the social welfare of Holocaust victims. But even if modest parts of such funds

⁵ http://www.fondationshoah.org/FMS/IMG/pdf/Chiffres_cles_2007.pdf, last accessed June 16, 2009

⁶ <http://www.hlsenteret.no/Mapper/ENG/page/background.html>, last accessed June 16, 2009

are made available for educational and related purposes, they will not be nearly sufficient. ***There is no substitute for governmental support of Holocaust education, remembrance, and research.***

2. There is a continuing need for grant programs to support innovative projects in teaching, curriculum development, archives, research, exhibitions, and the like that goes beyond the base budgets of most or many of the Holocaust-related institutions. The large number of applications received in recent years by the Task Force shows that there is a clear demand for such grants, a demand that is to a large extent unmet. Funds created from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish properties can help, but by themselves they will not be enough.
3. Some of the funds that have resulted from collective claims negotiated with industry and government and from the recovery of heirless and unclaimed Jewish property have been made endowments in perpetuity and can be expected to generate support for Holocaust education, remembrance and research for many years to come. Others, however, have not. Thus, unless additional settlements are reached, the total amounts that will be available from such funds in future years can be expected actually to decrease. Yet the need for Holocaust education is, if anything, growing.
4. While it is understandable that country-specific settlements may wish to concentrate on programs and institutions within the given country, it is important for such settlements also to support at least in part programs and institutions outside the country. For example, one of the biggest challenges at the moment is Holocaust education in the Moslem world, which for the most part lies outside the countries where settlements are most needed or likely to happen.

The Terezin Declaration notes “the need to enshrine and to remember forever, for the benefit of future generations, the unique history and the legacy of the Holocaust (Shoah), which exterminated three fourths of European Jewry, including its premeditated nature as well as other Nazi crimes.” The Participating States further “encourage all countries as a matter of priority to include education about the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes in the curriculum of their public education systems and to provide funding for the training of teachers and the development or procurement of the resources and materials required for such education” and are “committed to including human rights education into the curricula of [their] educational systems.” The Terezin Declaration goes on to say that “Countries may wish to consider using a variety of additional means to support such education, including heirless property where appropriate.”

A variety of additional means will indeed be necessary.