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нелічбы і  
позвалі і  
дванадцят  
грыбных, на  
уц Украіны

Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa

Final Report

Мне 78 лет.  
далеко в старости  
радостью.  
Для меня это  
было праздником  
радостью. Ещё  
рае. Да и Бог

# Final Report

Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa



# Final Report

Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa

Final Report from the Fund Executive, first part

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## **Introduction by Kaspar Villiger, President of the Swiss Confederation**

The Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa is an example of tangible solidarity with victims, with the weak, the needy, and the disadvantaged. It emerged in the wake of the debate on dormant assets and the role of Switzerland in the Second World War that was revived in the second half of the 1990s. It would therefore be inappropriate, in retrospect, to interpret the creation of the Fund as merely a spontaneous action and an unexpected initiative on the part of decision-makers. Yet it remains a fact that the activity was not confined to empty statements and futile discussions but that firm action was taken.

Now that the activities of the Fund have come to a successful conclusion, it behooves us first of all to acknowledge our satisfaction at the results. A substantial capital endowment was brought together by means of voluntary donations made not only by the Swiss National Bank and the two major Swiss commercial banks, but also by numerous corporations and private donors. The Fund capital was further increased thanks to accrued interests and distributed in the course of these last years to a large number of persons throughout the world.

Whoever is confronted with the task of allocating scarce financial resources to a multitude of uses and users, knows what difficulties and challenges lay in wait for those in charge of the Fund's operation. He or she is well acquainted with the difficulty of finding a scale of distribution acceptable to all of those concerned and of determining those who are entitled to benefit. The Fund Executive and the Fund Council exercised this task judiciously, arriving at a solution which was accepted and supported by the participating organizations further to numerous discussions, consultations and clarifications. Therefore, all of those who took part in this task deserve my heartfelt thanks and praise.

The sums distributed to the beneficiaries cannot undo what was done. The financial assistance is not a compensation for the sufferings endured. The recipients are not seeing justice being done for what they were forced to suffer. Indeed, what the assistance does provide to the beneficiaries even fifty years later is the assurance that their fate still evokes anxiety and bewilderment, together with the unflinching sympathy of those who were fortunate enough to be spared Nazi persecution. The feedback received from a large number of beneficiaries confirms that this aspect, above and beyond the monetary element, was of great significance to them and was duly appreciated.



First distributions in Minsk,  
October 29, 1998. Meeting between the  
President and a beneficiary of the Fund.  
(Photo: Vasily Fedosenko)

## Foreword by Rolf Bloch, Fund President

The Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa came into existence in the spring of 1997 once the issue regarding an active search for entitled beneficiaries of dormant accounts in Swiss banks had expanded into a general debate on the role of Switzerland in the Second World War. In setting up this federal Fund, it was Switzerland's desire to take up its humanitarian tradition and, free from any type of legal investigations and long drawn-out procedures, set a prompt sign of solidarity. In substance, this meant that those victims of persecution still suffering from want and need today were to receive a support in form of a gesture. Albeit on the surface this gesture was one of a material nature, representing an ever-present sympathy with those heartbreaking human beings who were obliged to endure such a terrible ordeal, it was also an expression of gratitude on the part of those of us Swiss citizens who, despite the privations imposed by the war, remained spared from any such persecution.

This gesture is therefore not a question of atonement, compensation, or restitution, but rather an expression of human compassion and a recognition of the fate suffered. It is the moral dimension which is at the core.

In setting up this Fund, Switzerland also got things moving on all continents. I myself was privileged to learn during my on-site visits – so as to personally make the acquaintance of the beneficiaries as well as to remove the veil of anonymity from the Fund – that the assistance provided was understood and perceived as a humanitarian gesture. It was appreciated by the Holocaust survivors and also deeply touched them. In many countries, notably in the eastern regions of Europe, the Swiss Fund was the first time that such a sign of solidarity had been forthcoming. For many of the needy and destitute, this financial assistance provided them with a possibility to somewhat enhance the quality of life in their twilight years whether by purchasing new medicines, paying for operations to improve their health, or shopping for warm clothing or things to brighten up every-day life. Above and beyond its impact on the individual beneficiaries, the activities of the Fund permitted the various groups of victims to consolidate the network of their relief organizations, in certain cases bringing them recognition at a national level for the very first time.

We are all entitled to look with satisfaction upon what has been achieved; our commitment was well justified. Therefore, this Fund created by the Swiss confederation is thankful to all of those who contributed at the time to the donation of the Fund means or subsequently lent their support in any way: the Swiss National Bank, industrial and service corporations, as well as individual donors. I would also like to extend my cordial thanks to all of those who made it possible to carry out this ambitious undertaking which had to be constructed from the very groundwork on up and with the mere discretion called for in myriad details, along with all of those who made this possible thanks to their ideas, guidance, and enthusiastic cooperation: the members of the Fund Executive and of the Fund Council, the Fund's General Secretariat, the Auditors, and the national organizations – both Jewish and non-Jewish – in the different countries who located the potential beneficiaries and who participated in carrying out and monitoring the distributions. Constructive cooperation and mutual confidence were developed during the implementation process of this common task carried out in a spirit of full harmony. This proves that in the minds and hearts of those who participated, the Fund was a worthy cause, one that could be brought to a successful conclusion.

## Foreword by Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart, Secretary General of the Fund

This year, an unparalleled humanitarian initiative, unique in every way, will be brought to conclusion. Never before has there been such an interplay between actors from the world of politics, civil society, economic circles and the administration. Groundbreaking relations also materialized within the Fund bodies and with the victims' organizations. This humanitarian initiative, pioneer in character, ventured out into unknown territory by virtue of its very mission. When the Fund began its work in 1997, the Fund Secretariat too, stepped onto virgin land.

Five years after its creation, the Swiss Fund has distributed the entirety of its endowment – a total of 295 million Swiss francs including interest – to roughly 312,000 needy Holocaust survivors worldwide. For all of those involved in this project, the work signified a steep upward learning curve, a large dose of public relations work, and intense activity under tight deadlines.

The work with the Fund Executive, the Fund Council, and the Fund Auditor was characterized by strong commitment, a sense of responsibility, and mutual trust, for which I would like to express my profound gratitude. My thanks go out in particular to the Fund President, Rolf Bloch, and to the Chairpersons of the sub-groups of the Fund Council, Anne-Marie Holenstein and Sam Bloch.

The Secretariat has a “technical” function. The main thing was to identify the problems and to adequately resolve them, at times seeking out innovative solutions. These so-called “technical” challenges were complex and varied. They ranged, on the one hand, from purely practical problems, to at times complicated issues relating to the legislation of each particular country on the other hand. Lastly, there was the question of communication and of confidence-building with the partner organizations. I found it an immensely exciting challenge, in cooperation with the numerous actors both within and exterior to the Fund, to be able to endeavor slowly but surely to construct, to form, to complete, and now to achieve this work.

The daily work of the Secretariat was marked by close contacts with the victims' organizations. These victims' organizations facilitated the work of the Fund by providing a wealth of important information and insights. It is impossible to list by name all of those persons and organiza-

tions who made it possible for the assistance of the Fund to be distributed in over sixty countries around the world. To all of them I address my sincere thanks for their excellent cooperation. The Secretariat enjoyed particularly close contacts with Eli Spanic, General Director of the WJRO in Jerusalem, who coordinated the vast distribution of Fund means to the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, and to whom I should like to take this opportunity to express my particular thanks.

In carrying out our mission, we were always able to rely on the efficient support of the local Swiss embassies, along with that of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Home Affairs, and the Department of Finance. They too deserve my most sincere thanks.

Many were the individuals in the Secretariat putting all their strength and energy to tackle this extraordinary and demanding challenge, and they did so conscientiously and with strong commitment. My thanks to every one of them. My profound gratitude goes in particular to those staff members who are ready and willing to sustain the activities of the Fund Secretariat to the very end: Carole Baeriswyl, Helena Danis, Mikulas Danis, Barbara Horber, Stéphanie Niklaus.

The contact and the personal conversations which I was privileged to have with the survivors of this human tragedy –



whose life stories are presented in a separate publication entitled “Stories and Faces of Victims of the Holocaust” – were for me personally an utmost enriching experience and a key source of motivation. To all of them, my cordial thanks. The dignity, commitment, and courage of these Holocaust survivors have left a deep mark on me.

The activity of the Swiss Fund is coming to an end. It remains my hope, however, that the knowledge and experience gained will continue, with renewed vigor, to inspire other humanitarian projects for the benefit of survivors of the Holocaust.

First distributions in Minsk,  
October 29, 1998.  
Meeting between the Secretary General  
and a beneficiary of the Fund.  
(Photo: Vasily Fedosenko)



## 1. Editorial

In connection with the role of Switzerland during the Second World War, various processes are currently underway in order to conduct a probe into our past. Different investigating committees have been set up, each one contributing in its own manner to this revolutionary undertaking: the internationally composed Independent Commission of Experts, chaired by Prof. Jean-François Bergier, has investigated the historical and legal aspects of Switzerland and the Second World War; the Swiss Bankers Association has set up a central information service; and in cooperation with the latter, the Volker Commission of Eminent Persons has undertaken a series of measures to facilitate the quest of the victims of the Holocaust and their descents for justice.

And last of all, as a gesture fully in keeping with Switzerland's humanitarian tradition, the government (Federal Council) created the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa back in February 1997, a Fund whose endowment was financed by contributions from the Swiss economy, notably the major Swiss banks. Since then, the Fund Executive has made decisions on the distribution of the 295 million Swiss franc endowment and effected extensive payments of assistance to the beneficiaries. With the capital now exhausted, the Fund has terminated its activities and can be dissolved.

The Swiss Federal Council's executive ordinance on the Special Fund stipulates that the Fund Executive is to inform the public about the activity of the Fund. The Fund Executive has chosen to do so by way of a Final Report which it has divided into two parts differing according to content, manner of presentation, and targeted public.

The present first part of the Final Report is dedicated to a portrayal of the Fund's history, together with an explanation, analysis, and assessment of its work. This portion of the publication provides information on aspects such as its justification,

the Fund bodies, the legal framework, the methods applied in implementing its task, the division of competencies, and the monitoring of the Fund's work. Further on, the concrete operation of the Fund is outlined including the decision-making processes, treatment of the applications, technical difficulties encountered, and the auditing control. Finally, a balance sheet is presented with the figures on incoming capital, expenditures, and residual funds.

A second part of the Final Report which bears the title "Stories and Faces of Victims of the Holocaust" contains selected background information intended to chronicle the historical context. Cold facts and data alone yield an imperfect reflection of the past for they are unable to grasp and transmit the meaning that the events which took place had for the individual persons involved. It is for this reason that the main portion of this publication is dedicated to the beneficiaries and to their stories. The symphony of facts and data accompanied by these personal histories facilitates a perception of the full picture of the events which unfolded at the time.

## 2. Background Information

### 2.1 The Genesis of the Fund

It was in connection with the public debate on the role of Switzerland in the Second World War that the Swiss government (Federal Council) created the Swiss Fund as a humanitarian initiative to provide immediate assistance to needy survivors of the Holocaust. The concept regarding the form this initiative would take was worked out in discussions with the donors, with representatives of Jewish and non-Jewish Holocaust victims in Switzerland and abroad, and with representatives of the Swiss government.

The legal basis for the activity of the Swiss Fund was laid down in the February 26, 1997 Executive Ordinance of the Federal Council concerning the Special Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa, which took effect on March 1, 1997.

The financial endowment consisted of a total 273 million Swiss francs donation on the part of the three major Swiss banks at the time (today the Credit Suisse and the UBS), the Swiss National Bank, and the private industrial sector. This endowment, including the interest accumulated on the capital, was destined in its entirety to the Holocaust victims.

The Federal Council Executive Ordinance envisaged that close cooperation be carried out with victims' organizations in the implementation of the Swiss Fund's mission. The contribution made by the representatives of these organizations, whether within the structure of the Fund bodies or on the terrain as operational partners in the distribution of the Fund capital, was a key factor, one which was indeed decisive in making the project a success.

### 2.2 Organs of the Fund

The ordinance foresees the following Fund bodies:

- a) the Fund Executive
- b) the Fund Council
- c) the Fund Secretariat
- d) the Fund Auditor

#### The Fund Executive

The Fund Executive is composed of seven members, consisting of four Swiss eminent persons, among them the President, and three eminent persons recommended by the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO). The Federal Council appoints the President and the members of the Fund Executive.

In May and April 1997, the Federal Council appointed the following members of the Fund Executive:

- Rolf Bloch, President of the Fund Executive
- René Bacher
- Edgar Bronfman
- Josef Burg
- Avraham Hirschson
- Josi J. Meier
- Bernard Ziegler

During its work, the composition of the Fund Executive changed as follows:

- Edgar Bronfman was replaced by Benjamin Meed in September 1997;
- Josef Burg passed away in January 2000 and was replaced by Noah Flug in August 2000.

According to the ordinance, the Fund Executive decides on the use of means within the framework of the Fund's purpose, adopts the rules of procedure and annually presents a report to the Federal Council on its activity. Furthermore it informs the public on Fund activity. It is interesting to note that neither the donors nor the Swiss government, which created the Fund, are represented in the Fund bodies.

#### The Fund Council

The Fund Council is composed of 18 members, among them representatives of Swiss and international institutions and organizations which are dedicated in special ways to serving the interests of the beneficiaries. The members of the Fund

Council were appointed by the Federal Council, 9 of which upon recommendation of WJRO.

On May 28, 1997, the Federal Council nominated the following members of the Fund Council:

- Rajko Djuric
- Ernst Ludwig Ehrlich
- Ruth Grossenbacher
- Anne-Marie Holenstein
- Robert Huber
- Francesca Pometta
- Christoph Stückelberger
- Klaus Urner
- Beat Wagner
- Rabbi Moshe Sherer
- Benjamin Meed
- Michael Schneider
- Sidney Clearfield
- Moshe Sanbar
- Rabbi Israel Miller
- Avraham Burg
- Israel Singer
- Charles Goodmann

During its work, the composition of the Fund Council changed as follows:

- Sam Bloch succeeded Benjamin Meed in January 1998;
- In September 1998 Rabbi Chaskel O. Besser succeeded Rabbi Sherer, who passed away in May 1998;
- Heinrich Rusterholz replaced Christoph Stückelberger in January 1998;
- Robert Huber resigned from the Fund

Council in June 1999;  
– Rajko Djuric resigned from the Fund Council in April 1999 for health reasons;  
– Francesca Pometta renounced to prolong her membership after the end of the first mandate in April 2000.

According to the Ordinance, the Fund Council advises the Fund Executive on criteria and applications.

### **The Fund Secretariat**

The Fund Secretariat is responsible for the Fund's day-to-day operations. It takes care of the administrative tasks involved and prepares the business to be dealt with by the Fund Executive and the Fund Council. Its work included intensive contact and negotiations with victims' organizations and the preparation of the decisions to be made in the Fund Executive and in the Fund Council. These decisions were, to a large extent, made by correspondence.

The Fund Secretariat took up its activities on 1 September 1997 in its office in Bern under the direction of Marco Sassòli. Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart was appointed Secretary General on 5 May 1998 following the resignation of Marco Sassòli. The staff of the Fund Secretariat was composed of up to 11 full and part-time employees.

### **The Fund Auditor**

The Fund Auditor Ernst & Young monitors the proper utilization of the Fund's

assets in Switzerland and abroad and verifies the accounts.

## **2.3 The Legal Framework**

The Federal Council Executive Ordinance determines the purpose of the Fund, those entitled to benefit, the type of assistance, the tasks of the Fund Bodies, and the monitoring of its activities. The Ordinance also contains stipulations on the Fund's dissolution and on the use of any residual capital.

From a legal perspective, the Swiss Fund is based on a clause of the October 6, 1989 Federal Law on the Federal Budget (Finanzhaushaltsgesetz, FHG) making it possible for donors to entrust financial sums to the state for a specific purpose. Whenever the appropriate federal authorities accept such donations, a so-called "Special Fund" is created. This type of fund is then administered outside of the general federal budget. Such a fund does not have a legal status of its own. The Fund bodies, once their members have been named *ad personam* by the Federal Council, are independent in carrying out their tasks. Nevertheless, similar to private foundations in Switzerland, they are subject to monitoring supervision by the Federal Department of Home Affairs.

This legal form offered the advantage of allowing the Fund to come into being without delay.

## **2.4 Internal Directives**

The Ordinance on the Fund contains stipulations solely of a general nature in terms of procedure and the type of assistance. Due to the fact that the creation of the Fund was not preceded by any extensive consultation procedure, the various conceptual aspects had to be defined and enlarged upon during the course of the Fund's operation.

The working methods and procedural regulations for the Fund bodies were set down in various formal decisions made by these organs. At its first plenary meeting held on July 7, 1997, the Fund Executive decided that applications could be approved by simple majority, and that a quorum was reached if at least five members of the Fund Executive were present, among whom at least two were members proposed by the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) and two Swiss members. Up until the moment that the present Final Report is written, the Fund Executive met in a total of six plenary sessions in which a quorum was reached. All of its decisions were able to be approved unanimously.

At its first meeting, the Fund Executive also made the decision that outside of the plenary sessions, decisions could be made by using a written procedure in which approval would be contingent on a unanimous vote. All in all, 276 decisions on applications addressed to the Fund were made in this way.

The Fund Council set down its procedural regulations at its first plenary session, held with a quorum, on January 21, 1998. In order to facilitate its assignment, the Fund Council decided to constitute itself into two sub-groups, the one bearing responsibility for recommendations concerning applications for the benefit of Jewish Holocaust survivors, the other being competent for those of non-Jewish victims. The Fund Council was presided over by a "Bureau" consisting of the chairpersons of the two sub-groups, Anne-Marie Holenstein and Sam Bloch, along with the President of the Fund Executive, Rolf Bloch. In the Fund Council too, a written procedure was introduced and subsequently often made use of.

The Fund Executive and the Fund Council further decided to expedite smaller applications for distributions of up to CHF 20,000 by means of a rapid procedure. When processing applications by rapid procedure, the agreement of the President and that of the Chairperson of the competent Fund Council sub-group was required. Furthermore, after the deadline for applications had expired in November 1999, the Fund Executive and Fund Council introduced a rapid procedure for so-called "hardship cases". The applications, which did not pose questions of principle, were submitted directly to the Fund Executive for decision after having been processed in the Secretariat.

The procedural regulations adopted permitted rapid and efficient decisions to be made on the 318 applications addressed to the Fund by the various victims' organizations.

## 2.5 Particularities of the Fund's Working Methods

### Parity in the Fund Bodies

One of the particular characteristics of the Fund's working methods is the parity between Swiss and international members in the Fund bodies. Decisions can be approved only with the approval and in the presence of both sides. The committed involvement of all participants and the good relations within the Fund bodies were indispensable prerequisites in carrying out the work of the Fund.

This parity in the Fund bodies did not escape from being the object of certain criticisms in the Swiss media during the first year of the Fund's operation. When the extensive preparations for the distribution of Fund assistance to Jewish victims continued to require longer time than had initially been expected, critics speculated that the administration of the Fund capital should have been placed solely and exclusively in Swiss hands. Yet such a procedure would not have been an option within the context of the Fund Ordinance. It would

have led to an institutional blockade. In addition, it would have implied a renunciation of the expertise and the coordination possibilities proffered by the representatives of the victims' organizations, and would have brought about unconceivable practical problems.

The parity in the Fund bodies proved to be an opportunity. In a very short time, the cooperation realized between the Swiss and international partners in the Fund bodies led to the successful and appropriate distribution of Fund assistance to approximately 312,000 needy survivors of the Holocaust. The spirit, forged within the Fund, of working together for a common cause, the unfailing commitment of all involved, the mutual understanding attained, the confidence gained, and in particular the results obtained – all of these factors contributed to the creation of goodwill, goodwill which reached out well beyond the cooperation within the Fund.

### The Dual Role of the Victims' Organizations

The victims' organizations at times executed two basically different functions within the Fund.

On the one hand, organizations such as the WJRO, the Hilfswerk Evangelischer Kirchen der Schweiz (HEKS), the International Romani Union, the Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse, and the Pink Cross

submitted applications to the Fund and were responsible for the distribution of Fund monies to the individual beneficiaries. In their capacity as partner organizations, they assured the discharge of payments to the individual beneficiaries.

On the other hand, the representatives of these organizations were, in their capacity as members of the Fund bodies within the scope of the Fund Ordinance, also responsible for determining the criteria for entitlement to distribution and for the decisions on applications for the benefit of Holocaust survivors. They fulfilled this role *ad personam* in the general interest of the Fund and of all Holocaust survivors.

It was not always an easy task to keep these two roles separate one from the other. At the early stage of the Fund's activities, critics feared that the WJRO in particular would substitute itself for the members of sub-group I of the Fund Council. The representatives of this organization, however, were conscientious in distinguishing between their two roles so that their dual role did not have any adverse effect on the Fund's carrying out its mission. On the contrary, it permitted the experience of the organization to be integrated into the Fund's work, and the decisions to be pragmatic, efficient, and applicable.

### "Learning on the Job"

Finally, still another particularity was that the first applications were received and processed by the Fund before the criteria for the allocation of the Fund capital had been definitively determined. The regulations and criteria were elaborated hand in hand with the actual processing of applications, sometimes after the first beneficiaries had already been paid. They were consolidated and adapted to new findings throughout the course of the Fund's operation. In some instances, the fact that all of the criteria had not been established ahead of time led to some confusion. By proceeding in this manner, however, it was the Fund's desire to avoid losing precious time with lengthy preliminary studies and tedious tabulation of all potential applicants with the result that a good many Holocaust survivors might have passed away before the Fund had even become operational.

What was at stake for the Fund was to distribute the Fund's endowment as quickly, efficiently, and carefully as possible to the needy survivors of the Holocaust. It succeeded in reaching this objective to an exceptional degree.

### 3. Context – A World First

The expectations were great when the Fund embarked upon its mission. For one thing, there were the expectations of the aged victims of the Holocaust; for another, those of the Swiss public and the international community, not to mention those of the organizations which themselves were treading out into unknown territory. The already complex undertaking was rendered all the more difficult by the highly emotionally charged atmosphere reigning in the public, as well as the impassioned polemics on dormant assets which characterized the political scene.

#### Criticism in the Air

Between March and September 1997, the issues concerning the role of Switzerland during the Second World War and the whereabouts of Jewish assets were in the spotlight of political debate in Switzerland for weeks on end. Despite the seriousness of the matter, various groupings and political parties down the line attempted to exploit the situation to their own advantage. In this scenario, the creation of the Special Fund was an exception. Indeed, despite all of the differences of opinion fueling the polemics, the announcement of the desire to endow a Special Fund for Holocaust Victims was applauded across the board. The widespread agreement was to be explained by the fact that the creation of the Fund was a gesture in keeping with the spirit of Switzerland's long-standing humanitarian tradition and was to benefit needy victims. Such a humanitarian action was also able to calm down the situation on all sides. When the four government parties met at the Von-Wattenwyl talks in September 1997, debate focused on the contribution of the Swiss National Bank (SNB), and the decision was made to avoid any conflict on this issue. Notwithstanding the fact that it would have been fully possible to call for a popular vote on the question, the parties came to the agreement that the matter of releasing the sum of millions as was projected, lay within the SNB's sphere of competence.

Practically without exception, both the national and international media paid high tribute to the work of the Fund. Individual critical remarks were heard at the time that the first distributions took place. Some of the points of contention had to do with questions of procedure, the composition of the Fund Executive or the Fund Council, and with the size of the payments distributed. It was further criticized that power plays were being engaged in, all at the expense of the Shoa victims. It was uttered that the various international Jewish organizations or their foremost representatives were inefficient or had fallen out of favor, and that they were allegedly focusing not on the welfare of those whom they were pretending to represent, but rather on aggrandizing the image of their own organizations and furthering their own political career objectives by putting Switzerland under heavy pressure. Even the Fund's administrative expenses came under criticism with certain voices saying that, even though they were not being paid for from the Fund's capital endowment, they were out of proportion to the modest benefits being granted. The criticism encompassed both the administration of the Fund in Switzerland, as well as the cost-consuming selection of the victims entitled to assistance by the WJRO. And finally, the allegation that the first payments in Riga were mounted as a media event for their public relations overtones.

When the Fund took up its task against this emotional backdrop in 1997, it was in many respects also venturing out into unknown territory. There existed no models or precedents upon which it could rely.

### **Individual Financial Assistance as Humanitarian Aid**

One of the innovations brought into being by the Swiss Fund consisted in providing modest financial assistance directly to the beneficiaries rather than by developing projects with long-term effects. Representatives of various relief organizations within the Fund bodies initially called into question the sustainability of such one-time assistance distributions. Even the feasibility of individual financial-assistance payments was placed in doubt, particularly with respect to the heterogeneous and less organized groups of non-Jewish Holocaust survivors. For example, there arose uncertainties as to the very possibility of effectuating assistance payments to members of the Roma, Sinti, and Yenish.

The question of whether it was not more advisable to proffer assistance by means of projects rather than individual financial assistance came up in a special way with respect to disabled persons. This group of victims concerns persons who were exterminated during the Nazi period and hence can claim neither survivors nor descendants.

Furthermore, the Fund bodies' agenda contained various applications for the consideration of special services and materials in lieu of financial payments for the benefit of Jewish Holocaust victims under the heading of so-called "Special Hardship Funds". The outcome of discussions on such points was that the Fund capital should be allocated to the benefit of the survivors of Nazi persecution, and that such assistance should take the form of financial payments to ensure that the assistance arrives in the most rapid and efficient manner possible.

In end effect, the method of individual assistance grants has proved its worth. Monetary sums were able to be distributed rapidly and in large quantities. They also reached beneficiaries in far-off regions, and the flow of Fund monies from Switzerland to the individual beneficiaries, i.e., "from Bern to Vladivostok", was clearly comprehensible. All of the groups of victims were able to be reached by means of these financial distributions, even minority groups and those which were less well organized. Above all, however, this type of assistance possessed a psychological dimension. It represented recognition of a personal nature, allowing each beneficiary to use the allocation as he pleased.

### **Incomplete Information**

One of the special challenges that faced the Swiss Fund was the fact that the figures on those who survived the Nazi genocide, that is to say, those who could be considered as the potential beneficiaries of the Fund, were unknown.

Added to this was the fact that the circle of beneficiaries had also not been more precisely stipulated. Article 2 of the Federal Executive Ordinance contained the following definition of the circle of beneficiaries: "The object of the Fund is to support persons in need who were persecuted for reasons of their race, religion or political views or for other reasons, or otherwise were victims of the Holocaust/Shoa, as well as to support their descendants in need". It was incumbent on the Fund bodies to formulate a clearer definition of the criteria for distributing the Fund endowment.

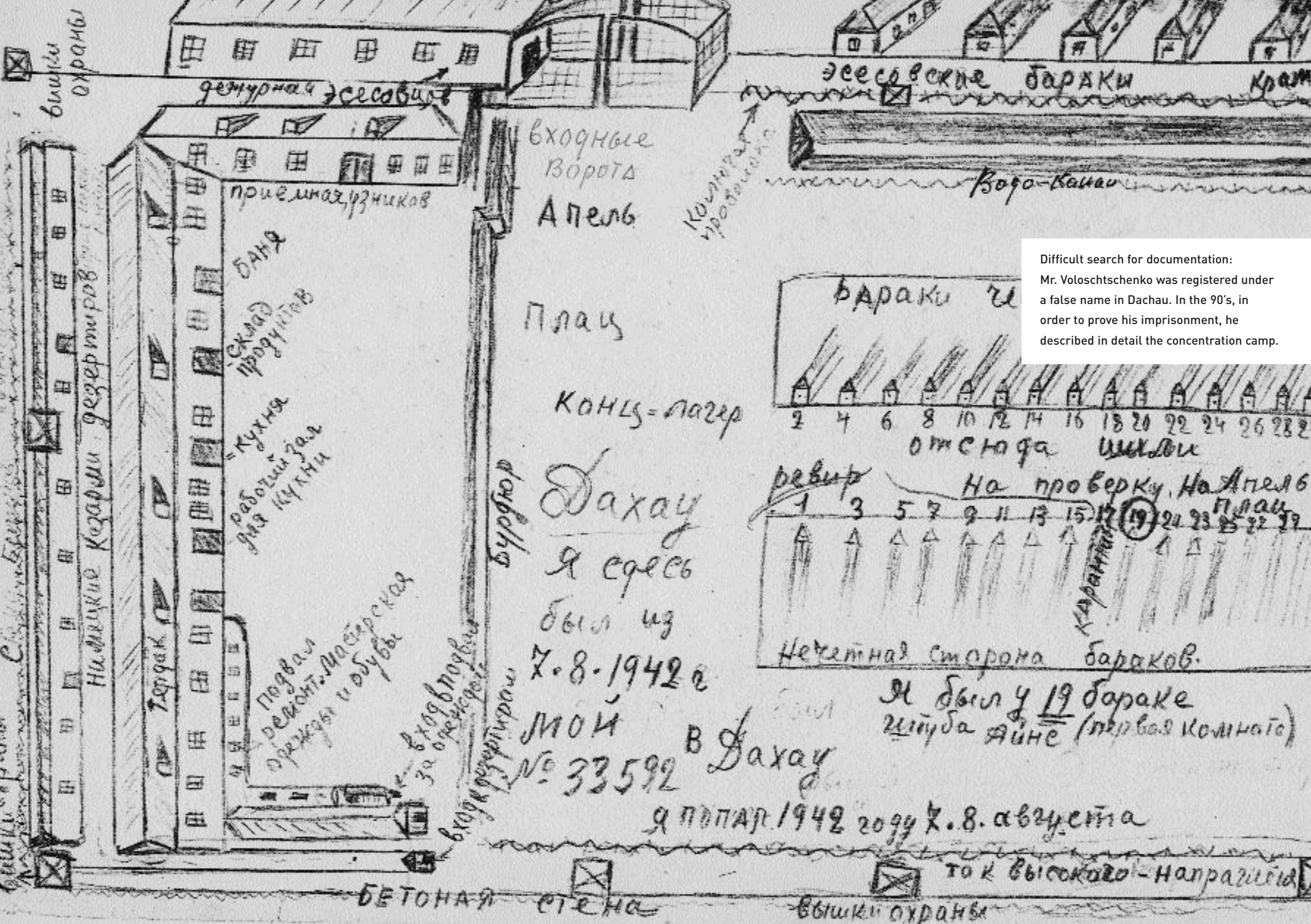
It proved to be particularly difficult to establish criteria concerning the extremely heterogeneous groups of non-Jewish victims. For such groups, there existed neither exact estimates on the number of potential applicants, nor a system on which the Fund could rely to compile figures on all of the victims, such as with the WJRO. The history of these groups of victims during the Second World War had been subject to little research so that the

criteria to be applied had to be worked out and modified during the course of the Fund's operation.

As mentioned above, due to humanitarian considerations, the Fund decided to begin with its distributions of financial assistance despite the absence of comprehensive statistical documentation which would have enabled reliable plans to be made for making the payments. The compilation of Holocaust survivors and Nazi victims was a pioneer task from which the organizations and their members also drew profit above and beyond the financial assistance of the Swiss Fund. Moreover, finding and collecting documentation confirming the persecution was a major challenge for both the applying victims and the organizations.

### **Understood as a Humanitarian Act**

The Fund began to operate inspired by the idea that it was vested with a humanitarian mission. Even if the Fund as an offshoot of debate on the role of Switzerland in the Second World War and particularly that of dormant accounts, it was nonetheless conceived as a humanitarian initiative. This fundamental understanding of the Fund as a humanitarian initiative – and not as compensation, atonement, or restitution – was something new in relation to payments made to Holocaust victims.



Difficult search for documentation:  
 Mr. Voloschtschenko was registered under  
 a false name in Dachau. In the 90's, in  
 order to prove his imprisonment, he  
 described in detail the concentration camp.

Я здесь  
 был из  
 7.8.1942 в  
 мой  
 № 33592 в Дачау

я попал 1942 году 7.8. августа

Я был у 19 бараке  
 Шюба Яине (первая комната)

БЕТОННАЯ стена

вышки охраны

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Being understood as a humanitarian project also had repercussions on the application procedure. Further, it defined the role of the organizations and determined the approach taken by the Fund bodies. The main point was for the Fund Executive to decide autonomously on each individual application. There existed no legal claim on receiving assistance from the Fund, and the Fund Executive reserved itself the right to adapt the guidelines for distribution of Fund capital whenever necessary throughout the course of operation.

Humanitarian projects are characterized by the fact that the financial resources are limited and hence they must be distributed according to established priorities. On the other hand, they present the huge advan-

tage of channeling assistance to the recipients rapidly and without administrative red tape.

During the initial phase of the Fund's activity, one of the most crucial challenges was to convey the idea of the Swiss Fund as being humanitarian support. This aspect came up almost every time new relations were being forged with the various partner organizations. During the course of operation, the Fund was able to consolidate its identity as a humanitarian project.

Some of the most significant differences between humanitarian projects and compensation have been summarized in the table here-below:

The Differences between Humanitarian Aid and Compensation

	Humanitarian aid (e.g. Swiss Fund)	Compensation/restitution/ atonement/reparations
1. Basic concept	Solidarity	Justice
2. Relation between payment source and beneficiary	Absence of a causal relationship between donor and victim	Causal nexus between the accuser and the accused
3. Criterion of need	Payment exclusively to persons in need	Payment to all of those entitled
4. Character of the payment	Donation	Legal right
5. Implementation	Rapid, little red tape	Onerous procedure, legal process
6. Total amount available	Limited, thus implying the setting of priorities	No limit imposed, must cover the damages and prejudice caused
7. Individual amount	Relatively small, symbolic	Generally more significant, calculated as a function of the prejudice incurred

## 4. The Different Phases of the Fund's Work

The work of the Fund can be divided up into three phases which smoothly unfolded over time, each bringing with itself its own particular working conditions, challenges, and content.

In the first phase or information phase, relations had to be established, and the criteria and application procedures developed and communicated to the victims' organizations so that the latter might be able to submit applications for the benefit of Holocaust victims. Even if there were gaps in the information existing on the potential applicants, the Fund Executive decided on the basis of humanitarian considerations to begin with the distributions and, should the need arise, to review the criteria at a later time. The first phase lasted from July 1997 through May 1998.

In the second phase, that of application processing, the Fund reached its "cruising speed". From May 1998 to December 2000, the Fund Executive approved numerous applications. Cooperation with victims' organizations was intense, the objective being to resolve the multitude of questions on how to organize and conduct these worldwide distributions. In this phase, the Fund confirmed itself to be a humanitarian initiative.

The third phase, known as the final control and conclusion phase, began in December 2000 with the last decisions on applications. The lion's share of the Fund's work now consisted in receiving and analyzing the distribution reports drawn up by the organizations, in writing up various reports including the Fund's Final Report, in formulating a recommendation on the use of the residual capital of the Fund, and in tackling the various tasks in the Fund Secretariat in relation to its dissolution.

### 4.1 Phase 1 – The Coordination and Information Phase

The first phase was that of setting up, coordinating, and informing. The different Fund bodies got down to work, defining their roles and their working methods. The Fund Executive worked out the procedure for application and approved its first decisions on applications, thus forming a basis on which the criteria could evolve and the Fund endowment be distributed further. The victims' organizations had to be informed as to the basic conditions and the procedure for applications, thus enabling them to put together their applications on behalf of Holocaust victims and submit them to the Fund. In various countries throughout the world, the WJRO set up a system supported by local Jewish organizations intended to standardize processing of all Jewish applications to the Fund.

After the difficulties in appointments to the Fund bodies had been overcome and all of the members of both the **Fund Executive** and Fund Council had been nominated by late May 1997, the Fund Executive met on July 7, 1997 for its first plenary session. At this meeting, it approved the basic principles that would guide the operation of the Fund, as well as the manner in which the Fund Executive would function. Based on experience made in other countries, it proposed that 88% of the Fund endowment be allotted to Jewish victims, and that 12% should be destined to non-Jewish victims. It established the principal features of the decision-making process and decided to allocate the sum of 17 million Swiss francs to the benefit of the so-called “double victims” in Eastern European countries. At this time, however, there had not yet been any specific applications made.

Although the meetings of the Fund Executive and Fund Council held on September 15, 1997 did not reach a quorum, important issues were able to be resolved by correspondence. In this way, the Fund Executive made use of written procedure to approve the first applications which led to the distribution of the very first Fund means to 80 Jewish Holocaust survivors in Riga, Latvia, on November 18, 1997. This was followed one month later on December 18, 1997 by the distribution of Fund assistance to 23 persons in Tirana, Albania, who had been victims of Nazi terror due to political reasons.

On January 20, 1998, the first plenary session of the Fund Council took place, followed by a plenary session of the Fund Executive on the next day. These meetings set the course for the work of the Fund and for its cooperation with the Jewish victims’ organizations.

The first plenary session of the **Fund Council** laid the foundation for its work after the two Fund Council sub-groups had preliminarily settled various open issues concerning criteria and procedure. At this meeting, the Fund Council decided to create a Bureau to discharge the function of Council chairmanship comprised of the chairpersons of the two sub-groups, Anne-Marie Holenstein and Sam Bloch, along with the President of the Fund Executive, Rolf Bloch.

During the first phase of the Fund’s operation, **sub-group I** met in two formal sessions and conducted informal talks on the occasion of international WJRO meetings. In November 1997, it formulated a recommendation for the creation of a worldwide system for distributing Fund capital to Jewish Holocaust survivors. It presented a proposal on the criteria to be applied in connection with distributions to Jewish applicants. Furthermore, it elaborated a regional distribution scale together with a detailed apportionment per country for distributions to be made within the WJRO system and which will be commented upon here below.

During its first eight months of activity, **sub-group II** held a total of eight meetings. It engaged in intense efforts to establish the criteria for processing applications coming from the heterogeneous groups of non-Jewish Holocaust victims. Due to the fact that Nazi systematic extermination was implemented on these groups of victims in various ways, different guidelines had to be developed for treating their applications.

Sub-group II minutely examined whether or not those Yewish who were victims of the “Kinder der Landstrasse” operation conducted in Switzerland between 1926 and 1973 could be taken into consideration by the Swiss Fund. It reached the conclusion that this Swiss operation represented a unique case of injustice within the Swiss socio-historical context regarding minority populations, and thus had nothing to do with the Holocaust. In addition, sub-group II also engaged in in-depth discussions on the possibility of providing support to projects for the benefit of disabled persons as a gesture and to honor the memory of those who fell victim to the Nazi’s “Euthanasia Program” and thus could not be counted among the survivors of Nazi persecution.

Sub-group II also established its operational budget for the distribution of Fund assets to the various non-Jewish groups of victims, and defined the circle of persons who could be taken into consideration by

the Fund as victims of political persecution. In its sessions and in written procedure, sub-group II formulated recommendations on a whole series of applications to the benefit of Jewish and non-Jewish victims. Lastly, sub-group II also sought out various approaches to solve the problem of insufficient documentation on certain categories of victims and to lend support to those organizations whose administrative capacities were rather limited.

The work performed by the Fund Council paved the way for the numerous recommendations based upon which the Fund Executive could come to its decisions.

The turbulent political atmosphere reigning on the outside presented the Fund with a particular challenge in building up new relations of confidence within the bodies of the Fund. To a certain extent, the same organizations and the same individuals were active both in this external environment and within the Fund organs. The mutual commitment to come to the assistance of the Holocaust victims as rapidly as possible served to cement the teamwork within the Fund, rendering it all the more resolute in face of the external adversity.

## Key of Distribution

On the occasion of its first meeting on July 7, 1997, the **Fund Executive** laid down a provisional key of distribution for the allocation of the Fund endowment between Jewish and non-Jewish applicants. This 88:12 distribution scale corresponded approximately to the data on the number of systematically persecuted Jewish and non-Jewish categories of victims compiled in a study prepared for the Fund by Professor Klaus Urner, Fund Council member and Professor of Contemporary History at the Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) in Zurich.

Sub-group I of the Fund Council proposed that the amount of CHF 240 million (Swiss francs) – corresponding to 170.7 million USD – reserved for distributions to Jewish survivors be broken down according to region as follows:

Region	Percentage	Amount (million USD)	Amount (million USD)
Eastern Europe and the former USSR	35%	59.75	84.0
Israel	35%	59.75	84.0
USA	19%	32.40	45.6
Other countries	11%	18.80	26.4
Total for Jewish victims	100%	170.70	240.0

Under the heading “Other Countries”, Council sub-group I set down individual country quotas which would later serve as the basis for WJRO applications from these individual countries.

Council sub-group II also determined its working budget for those applicants falling under its area of competence. Within the group of non-Jewish applicants, apportionment of Fund capital for the benefit of Roma, Sinti, and Yenish occupied a priority position. The working budget was subject to modification during the course of Fund activities.

The 88:12 distribution scale was applicable to the distributions of the initial endowment capital. During the Fund’s conclusion phase, namely on the occasion of the Fund Executive’s November 30, 1999 decision on the utilization of the accrued interest on the Fund endowment, the Fund deviated from the above key of distributions to the benefit of non-Jewish applicants.

## Different Application Procedures

In preparing their applications to the Fund, the applying organizations employed different methods according to victim group and target country.

## a) WJRO System

The Jewish organizations represent a clearly defined, homogenous group of Holocaust survivors; they also have well-functioning organizational structures at their disposal. For this reason, the organizations represented in the Fund bodies proposed that national systems be set up on a worldwide scale for the forwarding of applications and the distribution of Fund means, and to which all Jewish applicants in a given country could address themselves. These national systems were based on local Jewish organizations which created special committees for this purpose. The extensive information on potential applicants provided by the local Jewish organizations was a particularly crucial factor as in any given country, only one sole application procedure was conducted. The WJRO in Jerusalem initiated and coordinated this worldwide system. It submitted to the Swiss Fund all of the applications on behalf of Jewish Holocaust survivors, and it bore the responsibility for the distributions carried out through this system.

In January 1998, upon the recommendation of the Fund Council, the Fund Executive conferred its approval upon the WJRO system. This did not take place without any controversies. For one thing, the creation of this worldwide system and the coordination network still to be established in many countries delayed the

beginning of payments to smaller, already well-organized groups. In addition, on several occasions, fears were uttered as to a “monopolizing” position being held by the WJRO in terms of distributions to Jewish applicants.

The advantage of the WJRO system was to assure that the same criteria would be applied in every country and that all of the Jewish Holocaust survivors could be included. The system was linked to a vast information campaign and it allowed extremely large-scale distributions to be conducted rapidly. The Fund was in regular contact with the WJRO, technical points could be solved jointly, and the Fund was continually informed regarding the progress of payments in the different countries.

For the Fund, this meant that for each instance, the Fund Executive defined the criteria and the procedure for compiling the needy Jewish Holocaust survivors and then decided upon the amount to be allocated to the country. Once the application phase was over, this amount was divided by the number of eligible applicants. The beneficiaries’ personal details along with the individual amount were only known after the “application phase” had been concluded in the country concerned.

#### **b) Procedure for Non-Jewish Applications**

Fund Council sub-group II examined whether the WJRO model with country quotas could also be applied to applications coming from the non-Jewish organizations of victim groups which fell under its competence. It came to the conclusion, however, that such a procedure could not be put into practice in this case since the non-Jewish groups of victims were not homogenous and did not always dispose of the coordination structures required. In addition, there did not exist any statistical data on the number of survivors, data which would have been a precondition for setting any country quotas. As concerned applications for non-Jewish victims, any organization representing the interests of victims was empowered to submit an application to the Fund, even if it represented only a minuscule group of victims. Notwithstanding the fact that the administrative efforts involved in treating small applications were at times relatively large, this made it possible for minorities and poorly organized groups to be taken into account.

The advantage of this system was that payments could get underway relatively quickly. In contrast, the disadvantage was that not all of the non-Jewish survivors could be traced at the same time. So as to avoid using up the Fund capital before the last applications from less well-organized

groups had been received, the Fund Council decided to automatically revise the guidelines for distribution of assistance to a given group of victims whenever a certain portion of the working budget that had originally been planned for this group of victims had been exhausted. This type of adaptation was required in the summer of 1998 in connection with the processing of applications for the benefit of Roma victims.

For the Fund, this system meant that all of the data on the beneficiaries had to be complete prior to the decision of the Fund Executive if for no other reason than to guarantee that the beneficiaries received the Fund’s assistance solely by way of an organization. The applications were examined and processed as they were submitted to the Fund. The amounts per person were determined on the basis of a distribution scale. They varied between CHF 600 and CHF 2,000 as a function of the purchasing power in the country concerned. In view of the disparity and the degree of organization of non-Jewish groups of victims, this procedure appeared to be the only one possible.

In certain countries, well-organized national foundations coordinated and conducted the distributions to non-Jewish victims throughout the country. In Hungary, the applications of Roma survivors could be centrally processed thanks to the joint efforts of the authorities and the victim

organizations under the operational direction of the Hungarian Red Cross. In Ukraine as well, owing to the initiative of the Ukrainian National Foundation, a countrywide procedure was put in place to register all Roma. These coordination endeavors consolidated the victim organizations and enhanced the self-esteem of their members.

#### **Information**

The Federal Council’s Executive Ordinance stipulated that the Fund Executive should inform the public on the Fund’s activity.

At the December 1997 London Gold Conference, the Fund President was able – as a member of the Swiss delegation – to officially inform the governments represented about the initiation of the Fund’s activities for the first time.

In Switzerland, information work was conducted in connection with various press conferences on the occasion of Fund Executive plenary sessions, in talks with representatives of the media, in press releases, and in interviews. It is also in recognition of its information mandate that the Fund Executive is publishing this Final Report.

A major task of disseminating information was attributed to the victims’ organizations. They were responsible for informing

the Holocaust survivors. The Fund worked in close collaboration with them to coordinate the wording of the application forms, the text in circulars sent out to potential applicants, and the content of public appearances. The excellent cooperation in the domain of informing the beneficiaries was an essential factor contributing to the smooth running of the distribution operations.

Shortly following the initiation of the Fund's operational activities, it turned out that certain groups of victims, particularly the Roma, Sinti, and Yenish, were at a disadvantage in terms of their information and communication capabilities. In the first phase of its work, the Secretariat actively sought to locate non-Jewish victim organizations and to inform them about the Fund. During this phase, even members of the Fund Council and the Swiss embassies in various countries liaised as contact points for non-Jewish applicants and fulfilled a crucial function as sources of information. Furthermore, the Fund Secretariat responded to numerous enquiries from interested circles, individual applicants, and media representatives on application procedures and on the activity of the Fund.

The starting point for application procedures or for payments in a given country was often associated with press conferences. These events are individually listed in the Fund Chronology in the Appendix. They provided a unique and effective

means of disseminating information, and permitted the representatives of the Fund to explain the meaning and the task of the Fund along with clearing up any possible questions in direct talks with the representatives of the country's media.

### **First Decisions on Applications and Distributions**

During the first phase of the Fund's operation, the Fund Executive approved applications to the benefit of Jewish Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe, as well as to the benefit of Roma, Sinti, Yenish, and of homosexuals. This led to the first payments:

- to 80 Jewish victims in Riga, Latvia, on November 18, 1997, followed by the onset of distributions to approximately 20,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors in Hungary on February 12, 1998;
- to 23 persons in Tirana, Albania, who had been persecuted for political reasons and had been confined in various concentration camps on December 18, 1997;
- to two homosexuals over the months of March and April, 1998;
- and to 3 out of 44 Roma, Sinti, and Yenish in Singen, Germany, on March 18, 1998.

### **Decision-making Process**

The Federal Council's Executive Ordinance stipulates in Article 7, Paragraph 2

the following: "Applications for services are to be directed to institutions and organizations devoted to the interests of the beneficiaries. Any institution or organization devoted to the purposes of the Fund in accordance with Article 2 can apply to the mechanisms of the Fund."

The Fund was not empowered to process individual petitions from Holocaust survivors, but rather only the applications that were submitted by **victims' organizations**. These organizations verified the individual petitions and then submitted to the Fund an application on behalf of the beneficiaries who met the criteria the Fund had established. They also made any decisions on eventual requests for reconsideration on the part of victims who had initially not been taken into account. Along with their application to the Fund, they supplied information on their organization and on the distribution methods envisaged. Once their application had been approved, these same organizations were responsible for notifying the applicants and for effecting the payments to the beneficiaries. These victims' organizations played a key role in carrying out the distributions of the Swiss Fund.

The applications made by the victims' organizations were handed in to the Secretariat. The **Fund Secretariat** examined the application, obtained any information still lacking, performed spot checks in individual cases, and appraised the feasibility of payment arrangements.

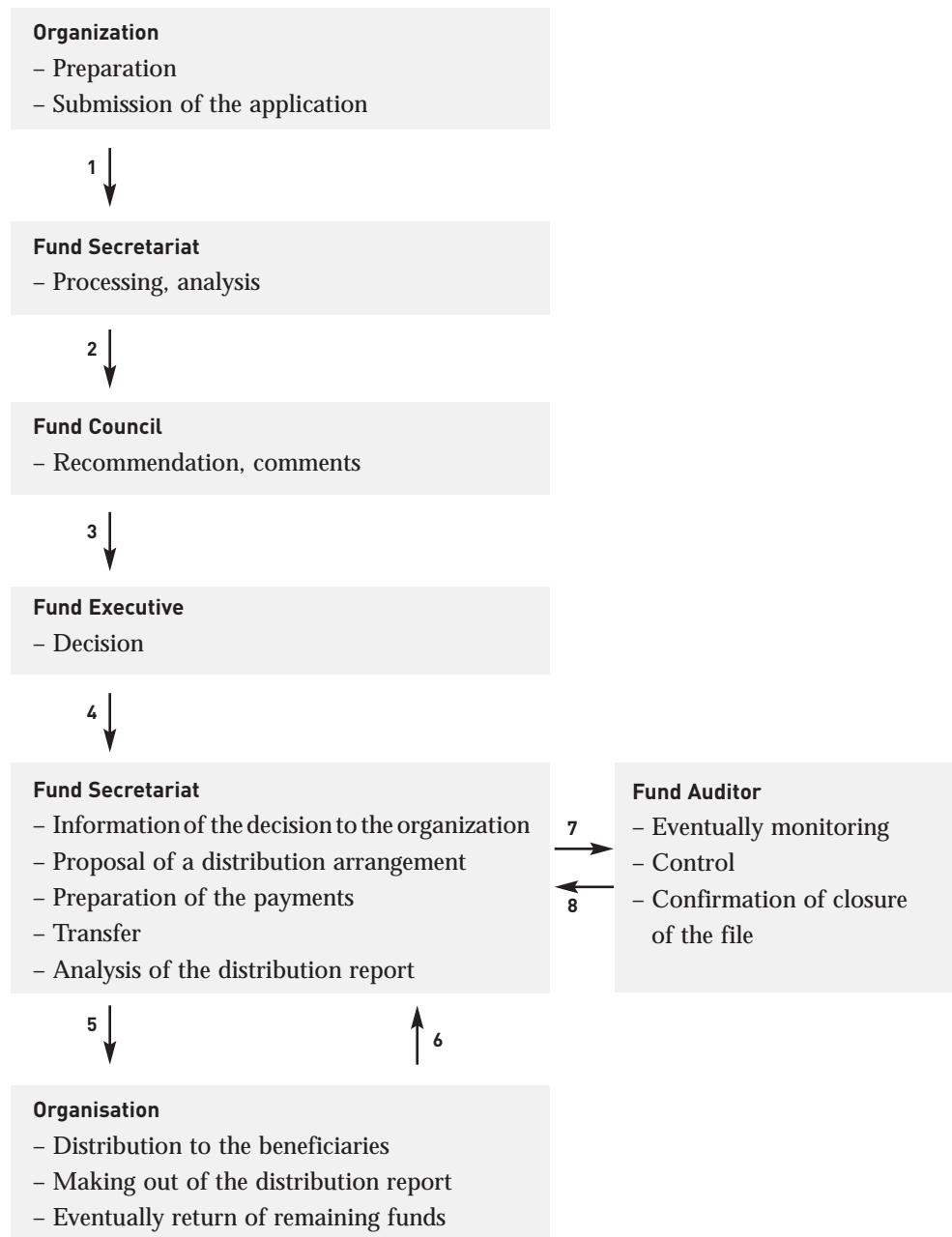
Whenever complicated questions arose concerning the implementation of payments, the opinion of the Fund Auditor was requested. Next, the application was presented to the **Fund Council**, first to the appropriate sub-group for its recommendation, and then to the remaining members of the Council for their comments.

Finally, the application was submitted together with the recommendations of the Council to the **Fund Executive** for its decision. During this application-processing phase, complementary information and documentation were added whenever necessary. In certain cases, the Fund Auditor was also called in as consultant.

After the approval of an application by the Fund Executive, a so-called Distribution Arrangement or Declaration was drawn up, and then signed by the organization. This document was the binding agreement based on which the organization was to proceed with the distribution of the Fund capital. After this agreement had been signed, the Fund capital was transferred to the organization responsible for making the payments to the beneficiaries.

This process can be illustrated schematically as shown on page 40. In principle, it was the same for applications that were submitted for consideration at meetings of the Fund bodies and for those decided upon by correspondence.

## Application Treatment



For smaller applications on behalf of less than twenty persons and for distributions not exceeding CHF 20,000, a rapid procedure was introduced for facility sake. Further to an analysis in the Secretariat, such applications, which posed no principle problems, were submitted for decision by the Fund President and the Chairperson of the appropriate sub-group of the Council.

Still another rapid procedure was introduced later on when the Fund Executive met on November 30, 2000. The last applications to the Fund, in that they posed no problems of principle, were decided upon directly by the Fund Executive as “hardship cases”.

### Distribution Costs incurred by the Victims’ Organizations

According to the Federal Council’s Executive Ordinance, the Fund endowment was intended for distribution to individual Holocaust survivors. The principle that this capital including the interest accrued was to be earmarked for the beneficiaries was confirmed during the first session of the Fund Executive in July 1997.

The registration of the individual applicants and the distribution of payments to the individual beneficiaries required a large amount of effort and entailed exten-

sive costs for the victims’ organizations, costs which they were unable to cover within their normal budgets. In particular, the problem emerged in connection with victims’ organizations whose degree of organization was rather poor. In addition, however, it also came up with distributions in countries where special contact points had to be set up and banks had to be commissioned to effect the payments to the individual beneficiaries. The issue of the distribution costs incurred by the victims’ organizations was not taken into account at the time the Fund was created. In September 1997 when the Secretariat became operative and was ready to accept applications from the victims’ organizations, the number of applicants was small. The problem of financing the administrative costs appeared, in utmost urgency for the major part of the organizations involved, non-Jewish and Jewish alike.

In December 1997, the three major Swiss banks – today the Credit Suisse (CS) and the Union Bank of Switzerland (UBS) – expressed their willingness to make a sum of up to CHF 15 million available to reimburse the expenses incurred by the organizations in registering the applicants and in distributing the payments. This financial pledge enabled the victims’ organizations to be given an amount corresponding to up to 5.5% of the outlay of Fund capital actually distributed to the Holocaust survivors. In the year 2000, the CS and the UBS increased their financial commitment

for administrative expenses by CHF 1.5 million, bringing it up to a total of CHF 16.5 million. This made it possible to ensure that the costs stemming from the distribution of the interest which had accrued on the Fund capital could also be covered.

The contribution which the CS and the UBS made to covering the distribution costs incurred by the victims' organizations facilitated the careful registration of Fund beneficiaries and the correct organization of payments through reliable financial institutions.

#### **Operating Costs of the Fund Bodies**

The cost of the General Secretariat was assumed by the Federal Finance Administration within the framework of a global budget and with actual expenditures of less than CHF 1 million per year. In addition, the Swiss National Bank financed the total costs of the Fund Auditor with a commitment of a maximum CHF 2.5 million.

#### **4.2 Phase 2 – The Humanitarian Phase**

After the criteria and the procedures had been developed during the first phase, the Fund was able to reach a gratifying level of efficiency. During this phase, numerous applications were approved in a written procedure and during the meetings of the Fund Executive. This phase lasted from May 12, 1998 up until December 14, 2000, the day on which the Fund Executive met to approve the last applications. Throughout phase 2, the Fund continually reexamined the distribution criteria, especially in view of the ever-diminishing Fund means.

The technical complexity of preparing rapid and carefully conducted distributions simultaneously in more than sixty countries over the world is something which is often underestimated. For one thing, large-scale distributions such as those connected with Jewish Holocaust survivors in the USA and Israel, represented a large practical challenge for the victims' organizations in terms of coordination, organization, and implementation. In other countries, and sometimes even for relatively small-scale distributions, it was furthermore necessary to clarify and find solutions to problems regarding currency exchange, the social security system, fiscal aspects, bank creditworthiness, and international sanctions as in the case of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The victims' organizations went to great lengths to mobilize resources in order to process the applications of Holocaust survivors and carry out the distribution of payments for the applications approved. Extensive payments were able to be brought to conclusion. This phase, during which the Fund reached its "cruising speed", also saw the greatest volume of work in the Fund Secretariat and the highest number of personnel.

The **Fund Executive** held a meeting on May 12, 1998 with regard to the distributions to Jewish beneficiaries in the USA. In addition, it made decisions on the still outstanding matters of criteria, in particular those relating to applicants who had been persecuted for political reasons. It introduced a rapid procedure for smaller applications, and it approved – among others – an application from the WJRO for distributions to Jewish Holocaust survivors in the USA.

In its March 10, 1999 plenary session, the Fund Executive approved applications in the range of approximately CHF 130 million. The focal point was on the numerous applications of the WJRO which included an application amounting to USD 59.75 million (about CHF 85 million) for over 100,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors in Israel, and an application for assistance to "Righteous among the Nations" living in Eastern Europe. This group of victims refers to those Christians who "came to

the rescue”, putting their own lives in danger in order to help the Jews. Among those applications approved with regard to non-Jewish victims, there was one for six handicapped persons who had been able to escape the “Euthanasia Program”.

After the expiration of the deadline for submission of applications to the Fund that had already been announced in March 1999, the Fund Executive met on November 30, 1999. Within the scope of decisions pertaining to the use of residual funds, including accrued interest, it proved to be possible for the Fund Executive to entirely lift the age limit which had had to be introduced for former “political” concentration camp inmates. Additionally, it adopted a decision of general principle to examine an application for the benefit of Roma victims in Ukraine as soon as it was submitted in complete form. And so, the applications still being expected continued to be taken into consideration by the Fund in the sense of “hardship cases”.

On the occasion of its December 14, 2000 plenary session, to which the Chairpersons of the Fund Council sub-groups were also invited, the Fund Executive made decisions on the last applications. From that point on, the Fund no longer accepted any new applications. The Fund Executive began to formulate its recommendation to the attention of the Swiss Federal Council on the use of any possibly undistributed amounts of Fund means and of unused reserves.

Fund Council **sub-group I** found it possible to dispense with holding formal meetings in Switzerland by performing its duties by way of written procedure. It coordinated its recommendations through the sub-group chairman and on the occasion of international meetings of WJRO organizations.

In the period running from May 12, 1998 to December 14, 2000, **sub-group II** held a total of seven meetings. In the second half of 1998, it consecrated considerable efforts in examining and adapting the guidelines for the processing of applications for the benefit of Roma, Sinti, and Yenish once it had appeared that the capital earmarked for this group of victims would be practically 75% exhausted by mid-summer of 1998. This sub-group also examined numerous other applications for non-Jewish victims of Nazi terror.

In November 1999, sub-group II effectuated modifications in its working budget so as to be able to take into account additional age groups of former prisoners of concentration camps. It also recommended that a rapid procedure be introduced for still outstanding decisions on applications in the sense of “hardship cases”. In March 2000, sub-group II formulated a recommendation of principle on how the residual funds should be used, and delegated the decision on this issue to the Fund Executive.

## Criteria

The Federal Council’s Executive Ordinance, as has already been mentioned above, remains rather general when indicating those potentially falling within the scope of Swiss Fund beneficiaries. The Fund itself was of the view that persons were victims of the Holocaust if they had been subject to systematic persecution by the Nazis or their allies, the objective of this persecution being to exterminate them.

The Executive Ordinance also contains the provision that the descendants of Holocaust victims could receive support from the Fund. However, the Fund found itself obliged to renounce granting any assistance to descendants. In reality, it was soon to emerge that the number of those directly affected by Nazi persecution was very high, and that there were no means available for distribution to descendants.

Furthermore, given that this was a humanitarian initiative, only those persons who were in need were eligible for assistance from the Fund. A person was considered as being needy if he or she was living on or below the poverty line.

The **Jewish victims** were persecuted by the Nazis for reasons of race. They suffered through all of the stages in the unfolding of Nazi persecution as they were systematically disenfranchised, committed to ghettos, transformed into slaves, and finally

annihilated according to an overall plan conceived on a European scale: the Final Solution to the Jewish problem. With over six million killed, the Jews represented the largest group of victims. As concerns the distribution of Fund means, all of the applications made on behalf of Jewish victims who lived under the Nazi regime or under regimes that collaborated with it, were accorded a positive decision.

With respect to **non-Jewish persons** who were **persecuted as Jews** by virtue of the Nuremberg Laws, the same criteria applied as for applications on behalf of Jewish survivors.

**Roma, Sinti, and Yenish** (gypsies) were also persecuted for reasons of race during the Nazi era. The history of the persecution of this group of victims has been the object of only minor research efforts, and the number of victims is only approximate. Moreover, there was also the problem of insufficient documentation as, particularly in the German-occupied areas of Eastern Europe, members of this group of victims were liquidated in countless undocumented, or only sketchily documented, mass executions by firing squad. Estimates are that the figures on Roma, Sinti, and Yenish victims lie somewhere between 250,000 and 500,000 persons killed.

Not only the figures, but also the whereabouts of survivors from this group of victims was to a large degree an unknown. Notwithstanding the lack of data, the



Fund Executive decided to begin with its distributions for humanitarian reasons. When it turned out in July 1998 that the working budget earmarked for this group of victims had been used up, the guidelines for further payments to this group had to be reexamined. In so doing, the Fund Executive came to the realization that the persecution of Roma, Sinti, and Yenish differed in terms of its systematic application from one country to another.

By virtue of the guidelines adopted in November 1998, the Fund's assistance was to be concentrated on those survivors who had been obliged to endure systematic persecution in its most brutal forms. These were the persons who had lived in the so-called "core countries" of Nazi extermination policy during the Nazi era: Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Croatia, Belarus, and Ukraine. In these countries, Roma, Sinti, and Yenish were destined for deportation and extermination right from the cradle.

As was to emerge during the Fund's operation, the persecution of gypsies in other countries varied from one to the other. The Swiss Fund continued to take into consideration Roma, Sinti, and Yenish who had been persecuted in these countries if they had either been imprisoned in a camp, ghetto, transit camp, work camp, or prison – or had been victims of other measures that can be interpreted as paving

the way to an extermination camp, i.e., assignation to place of residence, deportation to Transnistria, registration and being marked as Roma.

The **disabled persons** belong to the most often forgotten group of Nazi victims. The Nazis implemented population policy measures based on considerations of "ethnic cleanliness" and eugenics aimed at the creation of a homogenous master race. Sterilization and active death-assistance – that is to say, murder – were part and parcel of the measures applied to handicapped and disabled persons, along with those individuals suspected of harboring a genetically transmissible illness. The "Euthanasia Program" encompassed in 1940 the inmates of nursing homes and health care facilities throughout the Reich and subsequently expanded to take in more and more new groups of "lives unworthy to be lived". The number of victims of "euthanasia" is estimated at 275,000, while that of persons who underwent forced sterilization comprises between 350,000 and 400,000 victims.

The Fund gave a positive reply to applications on behalf of those who were forcibly sterilized, as well as those made on behalf of the few handicapped persons who had been branded as such by the Nazis, but were successful in escaping from the "Euthanasia Program". This group also comprised those who were victims of medical experiments and medical interventions such as the taking of blood.

The Federal Council's Executive Ordinance on the creation of the Swiss Fund provided that persons who had been systematically persecuted because of their **political views** could be beneficiaries of assistance from the Swiss Fund. This group of victims is not generally, in other contexts, considered as Holocaust victims in the strict sense since the persecution was a result not of innate racial or eugenic stigma, but rather of acquired, individual features. In particular with respect to the prisoners from Eastern Europe, there existed an additional racial element insofar as these camp inmates, labeled as "subhuman creatures" (registered as Russians, Poles, Slavs), met with extermination by some of the most barbaric means. The information available to the Fund indicated that between 200,000 and 400,000 political and "asocial" preventive prisoners ("Schutzhäftlinge"), as well as from 55,000 up to 415,000 non-Jewish Soviet prisoners of war were systematically persecuted and murdered during the Nazi era.

In May 1998, the Fund Executive came to the conclusion that imprisonment in a concentration camp could be understood in the sense of systematic persecution since no prisoner could ever count on leaving the camp alive. In this way, former concentration camp prisoners could as a matter of principle be considered as potential beneficiaries of Fund assistance. When the Fund began operation, the number of former concentration camp inmates who

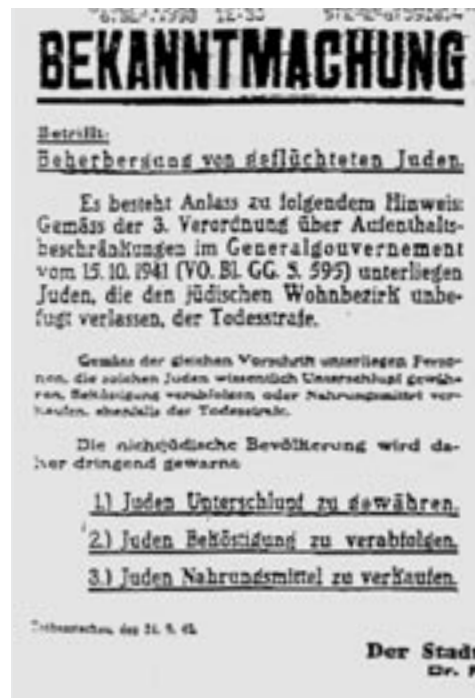
had been persecuted for political reasons was difficult to estimate. It proved to be much larger than had initially been anticipated. Since the Fund means were limited, an age limit had to be introduced. In the early phase of the Fund's activity, it took into consideration concentration camp inmates who had been born up to 1921 inclusive. In December 1998, this limit was able to be extended to "up to 1925 inclusive". This limitation was extremely problematic and its justification difficult to transmit since it excluded, from the Fund distributions, persons who were imprisoned in concentration camps as children. This age limit was able to be completely abolished only in November 1999 at the time decisions were being made on how to utilize the interest which had accrued on the Fund capital. With a few exceptions, the members of this group of victims who were able to be taken into account by the Fund reside in Eastern Europe.

Not only did the Nazis deem **homosexuality** to be a criminally punishable sexual aberration, they also interpreted it as sabotage with respect to their population policy objectives. Homosexuals were sentenced to punishment for personal activities, "re-educated", and finally sent to concentration camps. The figure of those homosexual victims murdered in concentration camps is estimated at 10,000.

Jehovah's Witnesses, or Biblical researchers, refused inter alia to bear arms and to swear the oath of loyalty to Hitler. Therefore, they were persecuted by the Nazis as being opponents of the regime. Some 4,500 Biblical researchers – nearly one out of four – met his or her death as a result of Nazi terror.

Upon the request of Jewish organizations and after a thorough examination, the Fund also approved an application from

WJRO on behalf of "Righteous among the Nations". The proposed beneficiaries were non-Jewish persons who risked their lives to save Jews from extermination in the occupied regions of Eastern Europe. The representatives of the Jewish organizations attached great importance to the consideration by the Fund of this group of persecuted persons. WJRO applications on behalf of this non-Jewish group of victims were financed from that portion of Fund capital destined for Jewish victims.



ANNOUNCEMENT

Concerns:  
Accommodation of Jewish refugees  
It is necessary to draw the attention to the following:

According to the third ordinance concerning restrictions of residence in the General Government of 15.10.1941 (VO.BI.GG.S.595), Jews who leave their Jewish residence area without permission are subject to death penalty.

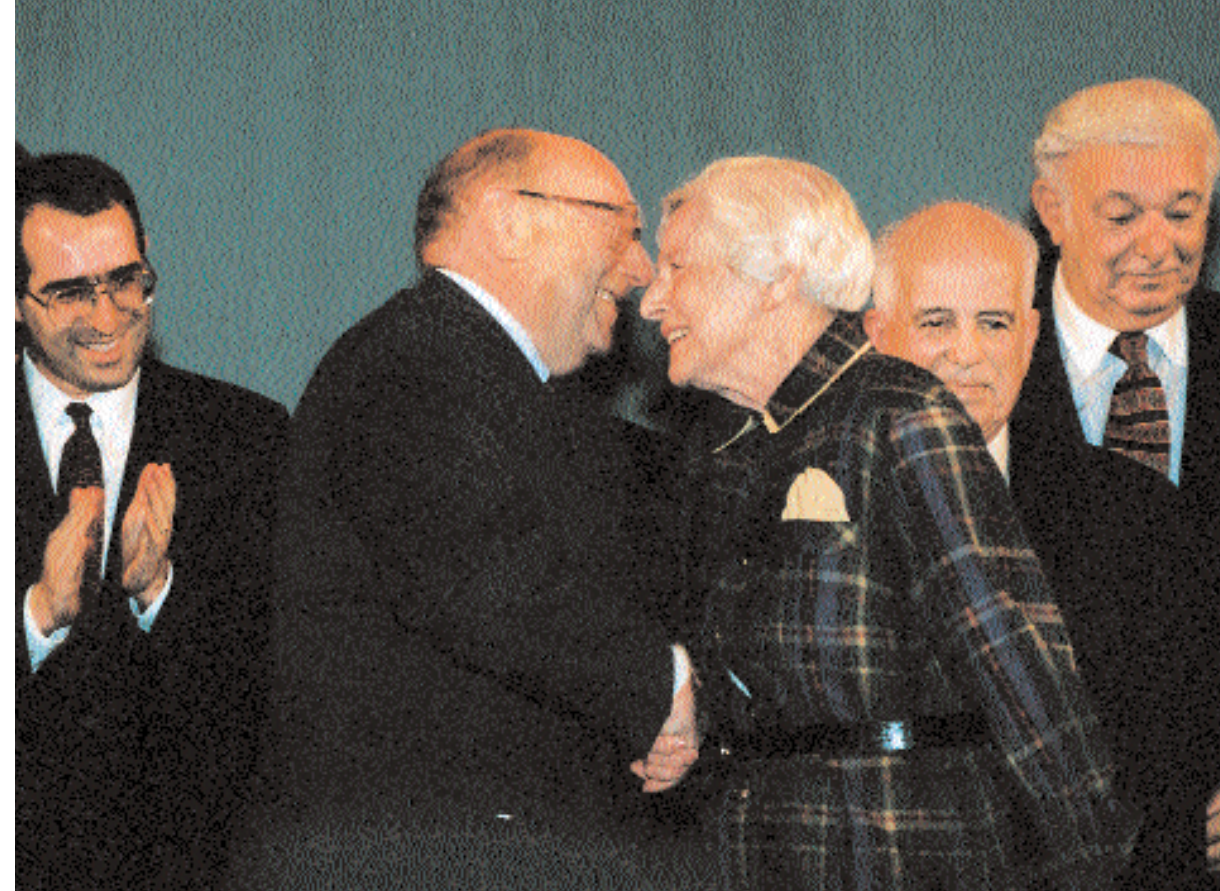
Based on the same regulation, persons who deliberately give shelter, provide food or sell foodstuff to such Jews are also subject to death penalty.

The non-Jewish population is therefore urgently warned against

1. Providing shelter to Jews,
2. Giving food to Jews,
3. Selling foodstuff to Jews.

Chenstochau, 26.9.1942  
The city captain Dr. Franke

First distributions to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Riga, Latvia, November 18, 1997.



### **Particular Challenges Confronted in Conducting the Distributions**

The victim group of Roma, Sinti, and Yenish is characterized by an important degree of heterogeneity. More than 60 organizations cooperated in distributing Fund assistance to this group of victims. But there were great differences to be noted with respect to the administrative capacities of these various organizations. The Fund was solicitous of having the different groups treated equally whatever their degree of organization. In several cases, custom-tailored solutions had to be found for individual organizations so that the distribution of payments for applications already approved could be carried out.

The vast majority of payments were conducted without the least problem by well-prepared and efficiently run organizations. The payment modalities chosen by the organizations proved to be reliable and rapid. The transparency existing with respect to the individual applicants and towards the Fund was marked by absolute confidence, and the communications infrastructure of the individual countries permitted contact to be made quickly whenever an unforeseen problem arose.

In the summer of 1998, certain rumors reached the Fund concerning irregularities in connection with local distributions. The Fund Secretariat and the Fund Auditor looked into these accusations even if they were often spread simply by word of

mouth and not supported by material evidence. The investigations and inquiries conducted with those persons affected and organizations concerned revealed that none of the various accusations in the cases brought to the Fund's attention could be substantiated.

During a press conference held in Bern on January 15, 1999, charges which an organization domiciled in Germany had brought against a person or persons unknown in connection with payments made by a Polish organization, drew particular attention. It was from the press documentation that the Fund finally learned the names of the persons allegedly defrauded. The Fund Auditor had already begun to look into this case intensively as soon as the first rumors began circulating. It had conducted a random monitoring on-the-spot and was present during some of the payments conducted by the accused partner organization. Further to the press conference, it was also able to begin with a precisely targeted examination of the individual remittance receipts. The Fund Auditor came to the conclusion that the distributions to Polish Roma had been conducted in a correct manner. Cooperation was carried on with the Polish partner organization, but the payments were subsequently effectuated without exception and exclusively by bank or post office. On December 17, 1999, the jurisdictional Court Bern Mittelland III decided not to follow up the charges made.

In reference to the distributions of Fund capital to Roma, Sinti, and Yenish, the application submitted by the Ukrainian National Foundation "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" merits special attention. In view of preparing an application to the Swiss Fund, cooperation was initiated between the Foundation, Roma organizations, the authorities, the archives, and the academia. During the course of this endeavor, a procedure was developed for documenting the persecution of Roma in Ukraine and for locating individual Roma applicants throughout the country. The applications of the Ukrainian Foundation on behalf of approximately 4,750 Ukrainian Roma led to the payment of USD 1.9 million (about CHF 3 million) during the years 2000 and 2001. The impact of this Ukrainian initiative is more closely described in Chapter 5 below.



First distributions  
in Kiev, Ukraine,  
November 24, 1998.



First distributions  
in Moscow, Russia,  
July 29, 1999.

Meeting with Roma beneficiaries  
in Schitomir, Ukraine,  
March 23, 2000.



Meeting with beneficiaries  
in Minsk, Belarus,  
October 29, 1998.



Press conference marking the  
beginning of the payments to  
"Righteous of the Nations",  
New York, May 30, 2000.

First distributions to Jewish  
Holocaust survivors in Russia,  
July 29, 1999.



### 4.3 Phase 3 – The Conclusion Phase

After decisions were made by the Fund Executive on December 14, 2000 on the last applications, the actual conclusion phase of the Fund got underway.

The tasks associated with this phase included following up the last distributions approved, analyzing the control reports of the organizations, ensuring the restitution of undistributed Fund capital, bringing the work of the Fund bodies to a close, and the elaboration of a proposal for the Federal Council on the use of possible residual Fund capital. The operational activities of the Fund are programmed for conclusion on July 31, 2002 along with the dissolution of the Fund Secretariat on that date.

During the last phase of its operation, the Fund also will draw up and edit various reports. Additionally, within scope of its mandate to inform the public, the Fund Executive undertook the publication of this Final Report in two parts. The objective is to present the work of the Fund to the public at large and to assess all that was learned from this unique humanitarian initiative – which was part of the discussions in Switzerland on its role in the past – so that this might be preserved for future generations.

The Fund Executive made use of written procedure to carry out its work in this phase. Its final plenary session is programmed for May 2, 2002, the occasion on which this publication will be presented to the public.

The Fund Council conducted the larger part of its duties by written procedure as well. In addition, sub-group II met in November 2001 in order to discuss its proposal for the use of the Fund's residual capital.

#### **Complex Distributions – The Case of Yugoslavia**

The implementation of various distributions by organizations with a poor level of organizational know-how constituted a special challenge, all the more so when the distributions had to be conducted in countries with limited communication networks and with high political and financial risks.

A particular case in point was that of the payments to some 1,400 Roma victims in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – proposed at the time as recipients of Fund assistance by the International Romani Union – which had remained pending since summer 1998. Initially, the distributions could not be carried out due to the

wanting administrative capacity of the victims' organization, and this was later complicated by the political situation reigning in former Yugoslavia. The war situation, the temporary collapse of postal delivery and banking services, and the international sanctions were all obstacles hindering the conduct of distributions in this country.

In seeking out a solution to enable its assistance to reach the beneficiaries despite these difficulties, the Fund succeeded a short time after the political turn of events which transpired in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in November 2000, in getting the distributions underway thanks to the cooperation of the Hilfswerk Evangelischer Kirchen der Schweiz (HEKS) which agreed to be entrusted with carrying out the pending payments, and the approval of the International Romani Union. On January 4, 2001, the first payments to Roma in this country finally took place. In August 2001, distributions to Roma in Kosovo were also able to begin. For these payments, it was the Fund Secretariat which took on the associated administrative tasks that were otherwise performed by the victims' organizations.

Roma beneficiaries in Belgrade,  
summer 2001  
(Photos: Eva Födelsdi).



## Supervisory Control

The monitoring of the appropriate use of Fund capital was conducted on various levels throughout all of the stages of the Fund's activities. Both the victims' organizations and the Fund itself had their own control mechanisms and worked closely with one another in this area.

The Fund deployed various control mechanisms in order to guarantee the correct distribution of Fund assistance to the needy victims of the Holocaust.

In accordance with the Executive Ordinance on the Fund, the Fund Auditor, the internationally active firm Ernst & Young, monitors the appropriate use of Fund assets in Switzerland as well as abroad, in addition to reviewing the financial reports and bookkeeping. The Fund Auditor explains and comments on its activities in the statement appearing in the appendix to this Final Report. The preventive instrument referred to as "Pronto Monitoring" took on vital significance in the stage during which the distribution modalities were being prepared in the various countries. Furthermore, the Fund Auditor checked current payments by means of "Intermediate Monitoring". The Auditor also played a central role during the wrap-up monitoring or so-called "Final Monitoring" conducted during the third and last phase of the Fund's operation.

Even while the processing of the applications was taking place at the Fund Secretariat prior to the transfer of Fund capital to a given organization, certain control measures were already being applied. The Secretariat verified that the organization applying did in reality exist, that it represented the interests of Holocaust victims, and that, in the application submitted, the organization proposed beneficiaries who met the criteria of the Fund and who had not already been taken into account by another organization. It also examined the distribution modalities proposed by the organizations.

Information, especially when distributions to the beneficiaries were taking place, was a prime instrument of control. This refers to information on the criteria and on the sum being paid out, information which oftentimes reached the beneficiaries subsequent to distribution ceremonies in the different countries, by means of the media or representatives of the partner organization. In addition, the recipients of Fund assistance were notified individually by their organization, by the bank, or by the Fund itself as to the impending payment.

All of the monitoring and control stages were vital to the correct distribution of the Fund capital. A final and concluding verification was additionally undertaken in connection with the analysis of the organizations' distribution reports as described more in detail here below.

## Analysis of the Organizations' Distribution Reports

Once the distributions to the Fund beneficiaries had been concluded, the victim organization drew up a distribution report for the attention of the Fund. These reports varied from one to the other in terms of content and volume of documents submitted as a function of the given country, the distribution modalities, and the degree of complexity. This analysis was conducted by the Fund Secretariat.

The analysis of the organizations' distribution reports along with the on-site monitoring conducted by the Fund Auditor were calculated to guarantee:

- firstly, that every Swiss franc that left the Fund-endowment bank account was received by a Fund beneficiary mentioned by name, and
- secondly, that the monetary flow from the bank account in Bern down to the individual beneficiaries – in other words, "from Bern to Vladivostok" – was documented with proof and receipts.

The Secretariat ensured that the name of every beneficiary approved by the Fund appeared in the organization's report, and that the correct amount had been paid out. Undistributed Fund capital was either earmarked for later payments by the organization or returned to the Fund once all of the distributions had been terminated.

The following step was for the documents pertaining to each application to be examined by the Fund Auditor who issued a formal clearance to close the file.

In connection with larger distributions, the Fund Auditor also conducted a final, on-spot monitoring. In late April 2002, based on the results of such final monitorings and on the distribution reports handed in to the Fund Secretariat, the final figures were to be available on the payments distributed by the Fund as well as the residual Fund capital inclusive of the interest accrued as per February 28, 2002.

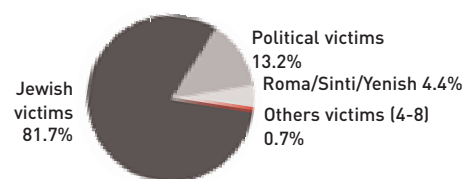
## Final Results

During its course of operation, the Swiss Fund was able to take a total of some 312,000 needy Holocaust survivors into consideration. As is illustrated in the following compilation and chart, the lion's share of the Fund endowment was, as had been anticipated, distributed to Jewish Holocaust survivors. As for the non-Jewish groups of victims, the major part of the Fund's assistance went to former concentration camp prisoners who had been persecuted for political reasons, as well as to Roma, Sinti, and Yenish victims.

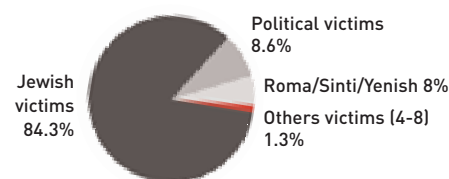
The Fund means distributed to the following categories of victims (31.12.2001)

Category of victim	Number of beneficiaries	Amount in CHF
1 Jewish victims	255 078	249 193 931
2 Political victims	41 326	25 405 860
3 Roma/Sinti/Yenish	13 763	17 024 228
4 Righteous of Nations	1 649	3 529 969
5 Disabled persons, persons forcibly sterilized	218	187 853
6 Christians persecuted as Jews	103	73 979
7 Jehova's Witnesses	69	104 012
8 Homosexuals	9	18 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>312 215</b>	<b>295 537 832</b>

Number of beneficiaries



Amount in CHF



The beneficiaries of the Fund were living in more than 60 countries throughout the world at the time the payments took place. The breakdown by country is illustrated in the Appendix. The following compilation on the distribution of the Fund capital in the various regions of the world confirms the priority that the victims' organizations and the Fund itself accorded to needy Holocaust survivors living in Eastern Europe. Extensive distributions were also conducted in Israel and in North America,

the traditional countries to which the Jewish survivors of the Shoa emigrated. In Switzerland, a total 81 needy survivors of the Holocaust received assistance from the Fund.

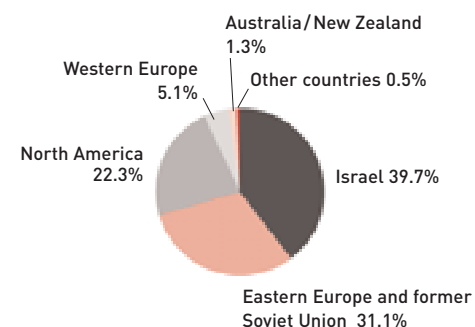
More than half of the beneficiaries of the Fund are elderly people ranging from 73 to 83 years of age.

About half of the Fund beneficiaries are women.

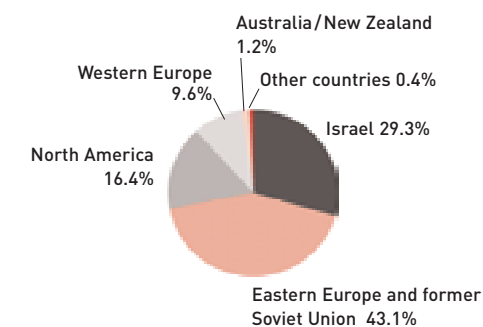
Fund means distributed in the following regions (31.12.2001)

Region	Number of beneficiaries	Amount in CHF
Israel	124 000	86 610 398
Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union	97 112	127 271 619
North America	69 593	48 444 976
Western Europe	15 896	28 252 924
Australia/New Zealand	4 046	3 688 800
Other countries	1 568	1 269 115
<b>Total</b>	<b>312 215</b>	<b>295 537 832</b>

Number of beneficiaries



Amount in CHF





## 5. Evaluation

The modest amount that the Fund was able to provide to the Holocaust victims was intended to be a gesture of solidarity. It turned out that it meant more than purely material support. From the reactions of the beneficiaries and from the declarations of the victims' organizations and of the authorities abroad, the following conclusions could be reached:

1. The humanitarian dimension of this financial assistance was a vital aspect for many of the beneficiaries, especially those in Eastern Europe.
2. In conferring personal recognition, the Fund contributed to prevent that the victims fall into oblivion.
3. The Fund drew attention to the fate of minority groups and, as in the case of Ukraine for instance, contributed to the nationwide recognition of Roma as victims of Nazi genocide.
4. It strengthened the organizational level of the victims' organizations and fostered cooperation among the organizations.
5. It played a pioneer role for future initiatives for the benefit of Nazi victims.
6. It consolidated relations between Switzerland and foreign countries.

## 5.1. The Humanitarian Dimension

Numerous thank-you letters were sent by the Fund beneficiaries to the organizations responsible for distributing payments to the individual beneficiaries, as well as directly to the Fund Secretariat in Bern. These letters also included testimony of what this assistance meant for the persons concerned. They bear witness to the fact that the Fund was understood as being a humanitarian initiative.

The vast majority of the beneficiaries spent the modest amounts provided by the Fund to purchase medicine, to obtain medical treatment, to buy food, and to pay their heating bills. They appreciated the fact that they had not been forgotten. In their letters, they often described both their experiences in the camps and the circumstances in which they were living today. For the most part, they are older persons living alone. Their letters demonstrate that an immense need for human solidarity with the infirm and the elderly continues to exist, above all in Eastern Europe, and that relatively modest amounts of assistance have an important impact.

Here a small sample from the large number of letters sent by the Fund beneficiaries has been reproduced and translated:

Germany (Letter 1)

"I am pleased to have received 500 USD in humanitarian aid. Sincere thanks for your assistance. It was a wonderful help for my family, and I thank you once again."

Ukraine (Letter 2)

"I thank your Fund and Mrs. Ekwall for your charitable action and the for the 400 USD assistance sent in this connection. This sum represents more than twenty times my monthly retirement pay."

Ukraine (Letter 3)

"A big thank you for your care and human warmth towards those of us who are the unfortunate orphans and suffering former inmates of concentration camps. For us, the sick and the elderly, this money has come right from heaven as a kind of salvation in our misery. My entire family perished in the concentration camps; I myself was the only survivor."

Ukraine (Letter 4)

"Many thanks for your help. It was such a surprise for me. I received your humanitarian aid right on time. I was lying in the hospital and my primary concern was how I was going to pay for my treatment and the medicine. Then your help arrived and everything was fine. Now I am back home with my family who is also very grateful to you."

Ich freut mich dass haben ich erhalten  
eine humanitäre Hilfe von 500.- US Dollar.  
Herzliche danke für das Hilfe, das war  
für meine Familie herrliche Hilfe und ich  
danke noch einmal.

Душевно благодарен фонду и лично  
мадам Еквал Барбаре за благотвори-  
тельную деятельность и присланное  
400 дол. США, которые я получил.  
Спасибо. Это более двадцати моих ме-  
сячных пенсий в гривнях, национальных  
денежных единиц Украины.

Я получила от вас удивительную  
помощь в 400 долларов. Огромное Вам  
спасибо, за Вашу теплоту и заботу о нас  
несчастных бабах сиротах перемещенных  
сиротках в концлагерях. Именно мы  
старше и очень больные люди, для нас  
эти деньги просто манна небесная, спасение  
от нужды. Все мои родные погибли  
в концлагере, я осталась одна. Сейчас

Vielen Dank für ihre Hilfe.  
Es war für mich so unerwartet.  
Ich bekam Ihre humanitäre Hilfe ganz  
zeitlich, Ich lag im Krankenhaus und  
war sehr besorgt wie soll ich meine  
Arzneien und Heilung bezahlen.

Ukraine (Letter 5)

"With joy and gratitude I acknowledge your 400 USD humanitarian aid. In view of the current, extremely difficult living conditions, these dollars really and truly represent an enormous material assistance. I am happy to note that our suffering during the war has not been forgotten everywhere. Once again, my cordial thanks!"

The Czech Republic (Letter 6)

"With what I receive after exchanging the USD donated, I intend to buy myself a new suit – probably my last – and I will dedicate the rest to emergency assistance to the refugees from Kosovo. At the same time, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to the Swiss population for carrying out this humanitarian relief operation, a population belonging to a state that remained spared from the hell of the Second World War and its consequences."

Romania (Letter 7)

"This is the money necessary that I need for medicine and for the purchase of the 2 methane-gas heating units that I want to put in my small apartment in order to have hot water."

Spain (Letter 8)

"We would like to inform you that we have received the monetary transfer of 1,750 Swiss francs in Spanish currency. We thank you warmly since this sum is very welcome to us. We wish you a successful continuation of this kind of action and a happy new year to all those dedicated to this humanitarian mission."

mit Freude und Dankbarkeit habe ich Ihre humanitäre Hilfe von US\$ 400 genommen. Unter den gegenwärtigen sehr schweren Lebensumständen bedenten sie mir tatsächlich eine grosse materielle Hilfe.

Es freut mich festzustellen, dass unsere Kriegsleiden nicht überall vergessen worden sind.

Für den Gegenwert der gespendeten 400 \$ beabsichtige ich mir einen neuen Anzug /wahrscheinlich den letzten/ anzuschaffen und den Rest widme ich als Nothilfe den aus dem Kosovo vertriebenen Menschen.

Gleichzeitig möchte ich meine Anerkennung und Dank der schweizer Bevölkerung zum Ausdruck bringen, dass sie als Angehörige eines Staates, der von der Hölle des 2. Weltkrieges und seiner Folgen verschont blieb, diese humanitäre Hilfeaktion zustande brachte.

Das erforderliche Geld, benötigte ich für Medikamente und um 2 Ofen für Methangas zu kaufen, welche ich in meiner kleinen Wohnung einsetzen wollte, für die Vorbereitung des warmen Wassers.

Les hacemos saber que hemos recibido el mandato de 1.750 francos suizos, en moneda Española, se lo agradezco muy cariñosamente porque nos ha venido bien.

Les deseamos continuen con su amable actividad, y les deseamos un feliz año nuevo a todos los que se dedican a esta humana tarea.

USA (Letter 9)

"Thank you so much for the Check of 502 USD from the humanitarian fund set up by the Swiss banks and corporations. This money will help me pay for the special eyeglasses I have been needing so badly. I'm very grateful that I will be able to see and read much better thanks to you."

England (Letter 10)

"Thank you very much for this unexpected and most welcome cheque for 95 GBP. Being disabled and housebound, I shall purchase a small, comfortable chair to make life better."

USA (Letter 11)

"Thank you so much from all my heart. This was a wonderful surprise, especially when you can use it."

9  
THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR THE CHECK  
OF \$ 502.- FROM THE HUMANI-  
TARIAN FUND SET UP BY THE SWISS  
BANKS AN CORPORATIONS.  
THIS MONEY WILL HELP ME PAY FOR  
THE SPECIAL EYEBLASSES I HAVE  
BEEN NEEDING SO BADLY  
I'M VERY GRATEFUL THAT I WILL BE  
ABLE TO SEE AND READ MUCH  
BETTER THANKS TO YOU.

10  
Thank you very much for the so  
unexpected, most welcome cheque  
for £ 95.00 being disabled and  
housebound. I shall purchase  
a small, comfortable chair to make  
life better. Thank you again  
SHALOM and all my love and care

11  
Gift of \$1502.00  
At least what I can do say  
Thank you so much from all my  
heart. This was a wonderful surprise  
Special when you can use it.  
I am so glad that all of you

## 5.2 Significance as a Personal Recognition and a Commemoration

The beneficiaries appreciate the fact that they had not been forgotten.

One of the beneficiaries from Poland, who had been persecuted for being a Jehovah's Witness, begins her letter as follows:

Poland (Letter 12)

"It is touching to see that the Board of the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa is so kind and remembers about the Polish girl victimized in the past, who never dreamed that the harm she suffered would ever be recalled."

Russia (Letter 13)

"How is it possible that you found me so far away and among the thousands of concentration camp prisoners? For me, your financial aid was a veritable celebration and a great joy. Thank you once again."

Poland (Letter 14)

"I am a Nazi victim of the Second World War. I have received the sum of 400 USD, i.e., its exchange value in Polish zlotys, as a beautiful gesture of solidarity on the part of the Swiss people towards these victims. I want to express to Switzerland my sincere thanks for its goodwill in this undertaking."

Ukraine (Letter 15)

"Never would I have imagined that your country would be assisting me in my misfortune during my lifetime. I have already received your financial aid of 400 USD. Now I can go on living and buy bread. I am a lonely woman, have no family, and as a consequence of the war, live alone."

Dear Sir or Madam:

It is touching to see that the Board of the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust / Shoah is so kind and remembers about the Polish girl victimized in the past, who never dreamed that the harm she suffered would ever be recalled. I would not endure the wrong if there were not such a community as Jehovah's

Мне 78 лет. Где-то была,  
далеко в ссылке, среди тысячи  
бывших узников наци и мою  
дружину.

Для меня это событие  
было праздником и большой  
радостью. Еще раз благодарю  
вас за то, что вы сделали

Je suis un des victimes nazis de la deuxième guerre mondiale. J'ai bien reçu la  
somme de 400 dollars US (équivalent en zlotys polonais) en tant qu'un beau geste  
de solidarité de la part de population Suisse à l'égard des victimes mentionnés.  
Très tenu, je présente mes vives remerciements et ma reconnaissance à la Suisse  
pour sa bienveillance en question.

Der schreckliche Hunger, Not, Leid jetzt ist alles in Erin-  
nerung. Ich dachte auch nie, daß Ihr Land mir in  
meinem Leben, meinem Unglück helfen wird. Ihre Hel-  
fe im Geld 400\$ habe ich schon erhalten. Jetzt kann  
ich noch leben und Brot kaufen. Ich bin einsame  
Frau, familienlos. Und wegen dieser Kriegszeit.  
Ich wohne allein. Es ist jetzt sehr schwer, weil

Estonia (Letter 16)

"From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for your kind letter with the pleasant news. It was a pleasure for me to learn that good people are thinking about me and I am extremely grateful for this."

von Herzen danke ich Ihnen für  
Ihren liebeswürdigen Brief mit  
den angenehme mitteilung

Es war mir eine Freude zu hö-  
ren, dass ein gutes Mensch an mir  
denkt und darüber bin ich Ihnen  
äußerst dankbar

E COPYRIGHT GEORG HALING  
D. BOX 158 EESTI-ESTONIA-10502

Russia (Letter 17)

"Your solicitude has deeply moved me. Help is always needed, especially by us who are old and ailing. I received your aid while I was confined to bed by sickness. Once again, sincere thanks that Switzerland has not forgotten us, and how good it is that your country remained spared from war."

Очень тронута заботой, которую выде-  
ли. особенно меня старую и болеющую женщи-  
ну. Спасибо мне пришла, когда  
должна была лежать в постели. Еще раз  
благодарю вас, что вы не забыли  
и Швейцарию, и как хорошо что  
ваша страна была спасена.

Switzerland (Letter 18)

"First off, I would like to thank you from the very bottom of my heart for the 1,000 Swiss francs which represent a real fortune to me. (...) Still, I am even more thankful for that which cannot be bought: for your compassion, your solidarity (...) in a word, for your very gesture."

Vor allen Dingen danke ich Ihnen von meinem  
ganzen Herzen für die Sfr. 1 000 --, die mir  
ein ganzes Vermögen bedeuten. Für jeden Franken  
bin ich Ihnen sehr dankbar, da ich das Geld  
sehr-sehr benötige. Aber dankbar bin ich noch  
mehr für das Unbezahlbare: Für Ihr Mitge-  
fühl, Ihre Solidarität, Ihre Güte, Ihre Mensch-  
lichkeit, mit einem WORT: für Ihre Geste  
überhaupt.

### 5.3 The Recollection of the Fate of the Different Groups of Victims and the Recognition of Minority Groups

In the formulation of its Executive Ordinance and in specifying the purpose of the Fund, the Federal Council stipulated that all categories of victims who suffered systematic persecution at the hands of the Nazi regime should be taken into consideration. In this way, the Fund also assisted smaller, rather neglected groups of victims in receiving equal treatment and sometimes even in receiving first-time recognition as victims of Nazi persecution. This recognition found an echo in subsequent initiatives for the benefit of Nazi victims, for instance in the creation of the International Fund for Victims of Nazi Persecution in Great Britain, or in relation to the utilization made of the settlement payment in the case of the class-action suit against the major Swiss banks.

Through its activities in Switzerland and abroad, the Fund was able to remind the public of the fact that the Nazi regime systematically persecuted not only the well-known, large groups of victims, but also a good many other groups in numerous countries for exactly the same underlying reasons.

As already mentioned above, the Ukrainian Foundation "Mutual Understanding and Reconciliation" broke new

USA (Letter 19)

"I wish to thank you for payment received from your Fund. This was the first time anybody has compensated me, since I left Germany, so I am more than grateful for your kindness. It is most welcome in my old age."

Bulgaria (Letter 20)

"Allow us to express our immense gratitude for your gesture of financial assistance. This is the first time in the world that a gesture has been made to Roma – the eternal victim – for whom the Holocaust goes on in another form."

Romania (Letter 21)

"This assistance was the first that I received in my life since the time I got out of the concentration camp to this very day – from 1945 to 2001. It was an important gesture for me."

Belarus (letter 22)

"We are very pleased that we have not been forgotten, that you have remembered us, the former victims of fascism. Medical experiments were made without consent on us – children –, and the blood of child slaves was transferred by nazi doctors to wounded soldiers of Hitler."

Dear Sirs

I wish to thank you for payment received from your Fund. This was the first time anybody has compensated me, since I left Germany, so I am more than grateful for your kindness. It is most welcome in my old age. Of course it brings back some painful memories of the '30"s, when I remember as a

Gestatten Sie uns unsere grosse Dankbarkeit fuer die Geste der Finanzhilfe auszudruecken : Es zum ersten Mal in der Welt eine Geste zu den Romma - das ewige Opfer, fuer die das Holocoast in einer anderen Form gedauert wird . Die Woerter sind machtlos, um Euch, die Altruisten und Humanisten, unsere unendliche

pour l'aide qui je l'ai reçu grace a votre bonnevolorate . Cet l'aide a été le premiere de toute ma vie, qui je l'ai reçu de quand je suis sorti du Lager et jusqu'au present 1945-2001. Cet geste a été très grande et il reste pour moi un symbole de bienfaite.

От имени всех бывших узников фашистских концлагерей Освенцима, Майданека, Бухенвальда, Лахау и др. благодарим Вас и Вашу страну за гуманитарную помощь.

Мы очень рады, что мы не забыты, что Вы помните о нас, бывших жертвах фашизма. На нас, детях, проводились преступные медицинские эксперименты, кровь малолетних невольников нацистскими врачами перекачивалась раненым гитлеровским солдатам. На всю жизнь нам нанесен моральный ущерб – наколотые номера на левом предплечье. Среди нас много инвалидов I, II, III групп.

ground in setting up countrywide structures to collect and to analyze applications from Roma victims. The vast information campaign linked to this and the compilation of documents on the persecution of Roma peoples during the Second World War led to an enhanced awareness of the fate of Roma and to official recognition – on the government level – of Roma as victims of systematic Nazi persecution. Such recognition is crucially important in terms of possible future measures for the benefit of Nazi victims.

The Fund's activities led to the first-time recognition of numerous Holocaust survivors even with respect to the largest group of victims, i.e., the Jewish victims, in that it targeted a wide circle of beneficiaries, thus reaching persons who received recognition as Holocaust victims for the very first time.

#### **5.4 Consolidation of the Victims' Organizations**

In connection with the distributions of Fund assistance, the WJRO created a worldwide system to register Jewish Holocaust victims. In every country, committees were set up with representatives of the various victims' organizations. These committees were responsible for processing the individual applications from the country in question, and for conducting the payments to the beneficiaries. During the discussions which Fund representatives held in Eastern Europe, the fact was

repeatedly stressed that this so-to-speak imposed cooperation within the WJRO system had fostered cohesion among the Jewish groups in the country and had fortified the existence of the Jewish communities. In Croatia, the Jewish communities organized a symposium on this specific topic in the year 2000 with the participation of the Fund President, Rolf Bloch.

In many countries, the organizations established contact with some Holocaust survivors for the first time. In Poland, while preparing their application to the Fund, the Jewish organizations located a total of 1,800 Holocaust survivors instead of the approximately 1,200 they had expected. In France too, representatives of the organizations announced that in collecting the individual applications, numerous Jewish Holocaust survivors were registered for the first time. This also holds true for Switzerland where more Holocaust survivors were located than had been known to the organizations beforehand.

Furthermore, the victims' organizations – be they Jewish or non-Jewish – carried out work and put structures in place which can be used immediately for other initiatives for Holocaust survivors. For instance, they brought their databases and other documentation up to date, and gained valuable experience in banking procedures and postal services, not to mention in the operational implementation of humanitarian projects.

#### **5.5 Pioneer Role for Future Initiatives for the Benefit of Nazi Victims**

Representatives of victims' organizations and those of the authorities abroad pointed out on several occasions that the significance of the Fund lay in the fact that it was the first to provide such a kind of moral and financial assistance to those who had been persecuted by the Nazis. A representative of the Polish Embassy in Bern declared in December 2001: "The Swiss Fund was the ball that got discussions rolling in other countries."

At various discussions held in 1998, representatives of Jewish organizations pointed out, with acknowledgement, that the constructive, confidence-inspiring, and goal-oriented cooperation within the Fund had a positive effect on talks in other areas, particularly in connection with the bank settlement.

As already indicated, the Fund played a pioneer role in the recognition of minority groups of victims, a recognition that had repercussions in other contexts as well.

To some extent, other initiatives built themselves up directly on the base provided by the work already accomplished with applications made to the Swiss Fund. For example, based on the applications made to the Swiss Fund, distributions were initiated from the International Fund for Victims of the Nazi Persecution

in Great Britain, and from the "Persson Fund" created by the Swedish government to victims now living in Sweden. In Poland, a large group of Roma Nazi victims also received an assistance payment from the Foundation "Polish-German Reconciliation" after they had been taken into account by the Swiss Fund. The Pink Cross organization reported that following upon the payments made by the Swiss Fund, donations from other sources were able to be arranged for the homosexual beneficiaries of the Fund.

In recent years, national foundations in Eastern Europe that cooperated with the Swiss Fund have launched their own humanitarian departments in order to conduct projects and relief services for the benefit of Holocaust victims.

The knowledge and the experience acquired were able to be applied directly and in an effective manner to other initiatives in the area of humanitarian assistance to Nazi victims. Representatives of the Fund enjoyed a particularly keen exchange of experiences with the International Organization for Migration in Geneva which is responsible for the distribution of financial resources from the bank settlement to certain non-Jewish victims, as well as for payments from the German Forced-Laborer's Fund to non-Jewish victims.



## 5.6 Consolidation of Relations between Switzerland and Foreign Countries

The humanitarian assistance to Holocaust victims and the close cooperation with victims' organizations abroad created a goodwill which is to the overall benefit of Switzerland. The distribution of Fund means contributed to the consolidation of relations most particularly with Eastern Europe and with the countries of the former Soviet Union.

The Polish government attached considerable significance to the work of the Fund. On November 22, 2000, the Polish Ambassador to Bern, His Excellency Marek Jedrys, organized a reception in honor of the Fund to which, among other personalities, representatives of Swiss political circles and the administration, the Fund endowment donors, and members of the Fund bodies were invited. Excerpts of the address of Ambassador Marek Jedrys are to be found in the attachment. In his November 29, 2000 letter, which is reproduced below, the Polish head of government at the time, His Excellency Jerzy Buzek, expressed his gratitude for the humanitarian assistance and the excellent cooperation, both of which contributed to fostering good relations between Switzerland and Poland.

Dear Mr. President

I would like to thank you very much for the humanitarian aid which has been granted from the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa to all living victims of the Holocaust in Poland and as well for the unusually successful, productive and congenial co-operation with the Foundation "Polish-German Reconciliation".

I am full of gratitude and respect to your engagement in favor of elderly and needy persons – Polish citizens who have been victims of persecution and violence by the Third Reich during World War II.

I want to thank you again for your great commitment in the establishment of the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa, for your assistance during the distribution of the help to the victims of the Holocaust and of the concentration camps in Poland and, finally, I would like to thank you for developing such good relations between our nations.

I wish you a good health, success in your professional life, happiness and welfare.

## PREZES RADY MINISTRÓW RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ

JERZY BUZEK

SJ/B446 19(50)/2000

PAN DR ROLF BLOCH

PREZYDENT FUNDUSZU SZWAJCARSKIEGO  
NA RZECZ POTRZEBUJĄCYCH OFIAR  
HOLOCAUSTU/SHOAH

BERNO

*Stanisław Piotr Przeworski,*

chciałbym Panu serdecznie podziękować za wsparcie humanitarne udzielone wszystkim żyjącym ofiarom Holocaustu w Polsce przez Szwajcarski Fundusz na Rzecz Potrzebujących Ofiar Holocaustu/Shoah, jak również za niezwykle udaną, owocną i przyjazną współpracę z Fundacją „Polsko-Niemieckie Pojednanie”.

Jestem pełen uznania i wdzięczności za Pańskie zaangażowanie na rzecz starszych i potrzebujących ludzi – obywateli polskich, którzy podczas II wojny światowej byli ofiarami prześladowań i przemocy ze strony III Rzeszy.

Dziękuję Panu jeszcze raz za wielki wkład w stworzenie Szwajcarskiego Funduszu na Rzecz Potrzebujących Ofiar Holocaustu/Shoah, pomoc przy realizacji świadczeń dla ofiar Holocaustu i hitlerowskich obozów koncentracyjnych w Polsce oraz rozwój dobrych stosunków między naszymi narodami.

Życzę Panu zdrowia, wielu dalszych sukcesów zawodowych oraz dużo szczęścia i pomyślności w życiu osobistym.

*Z szacunkiem*  
*Jerzy Buzek*

## 6. Closing Word

The activities of the Swiss Fund, which are coming to an end this year, have demonstrated that humanitarian projects for the benefit of Holocaust survivors are possible, necessary, and sustainable.

- It is possible, with minor administrative expenses, to provide humanitarian assistance to the survivors of Nazi terror in an effective manner.
- The need for solidarity is real and it is pressing. Those individuals still alive are already well advanced in age and, particularly in Eastern Europe, are living in most difficult financial and social conditions. They are forced to rely on solidarity so as to satisfy their basic needs, primarily as regards health care.
- The sustainability of such initiatives is, furthermore, beyond question since they are to be understood as an integral part of activities in the domain of human rights, tolerance-building, and conflict-prevention. The victims of the greatest human tragedy of the last century should be spared from need and misery in their twilight years. And the human race owes it to them to shoulder this responsibility. Such humanitarian operations also accomplish a task of memory which is an effective contribution to preventing that such human tragedies ever be repeated.

The responsibility incumbent upon each and every one of us as part of the human family still remains to be fully accomplished.

## Chronology

**March 1, 1997:** The Ordinance of the Swiss Federal Council of 26.2.1997 concerning the Special Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa enters into force.

**July 7, 1997:** First meeting of the Fund Executive. First allocation of CHF 17 million for immediate distributions in Eastern Europe. Decision on rules of procedure.



**September 1, 1997:** Start of the work of the Fund Secretariat.

**September 15, 1997:** Meetings of the Fund Executive and the Fund Council, which however do not have the quorum for decisions. Nomination of the Fund Auditor.

**November 10, 1997:** Approval of the application from WJRO for support to needy survivors of the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. First transfer of CHF 15 million to Jerusalem.

**November 18, 1997:** First payments of Fund means to 80 Jewish beneficiaries in Riga, Latvia, in presence of Fund President Rolf Bloch and the Secretary General Marco Sassòli.

**December 18, 1997:** First payments to 23 non-Jewish survivors of the Nazi terror, who were persecuted for political reasons, in Tirana, Albania.

**December 23, 1997:** Pledge from the three major Swiss banks for the reimbursement of the administration costs incurred by the organizations.

**January 20, 1998:** First plenary meeting of the Fund Council in Zurich.

**January 21, 1998:** Plenary meeting of the Fund Executive in Zurich. Approval of applications in favor of Roma, Sinti and Yenish and of homosexual victims. Approval of the system of WJRO for the processing of applications from Jewish survivors.



**February 12, 1998:** Beginning of the payments to approx. 20,000 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Hungary in the presence of Rolf Bloch.

**March 18, 1998:** First payments of the humanitarian support from the Swiss Fund to Roma, Sinti and Yenish in Singen, Germany, in the presence of Rolf Bloch and Marco Sassòli.



**May 5, 1998:** Nomination of Barbara Ekwall-Uebelhart as Secretary General of the Swiss Fund.

**May 12, 1998:** Plenary meeting of the Fund Executive in Zurich. Approval of the applications of WJRO for distributions of a total of CHF 45 million (USD 32 million) in the USA, and of CHF 15 million (USD 10 million) in Eastern Europe. Decision on the eligibility criteria for victims persecuted for political reasons.

**June 1998:** Review of the guidelines for applications in favor of Roma, Sinti and Yenish. Until the decision of the Fund Executive on these guidelines, all applica-

tions for this category of victim which have not yet been decided upon remain open.

**August 1998:** Start of the distributions of the “Zentralrat der Deutschen Sinti und Roma” to Roma and Sinti in Germany.

**Summer 1998:** Rumors about alleged misuse of Fund means by organizations of Roma, Sinti and Yenish. Conclusions of the monitoring by the Fund Auditor: the support of the Fund was paid out correctly.

**August 17, 1998:** Announcement of the distribution program for needy Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in the USA. Presence of Rolf Bloch at the press conference in New York.

**October 29, 1998:** First payments in Belarus to Jewish victims of the Holocaust and to former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, who were persecuted for political reasons. Participation of Rolf Bloch and Barbara Ekwall.



**November 24, 1998:** Start of the distributions in the Ukraine to former prisoners of Nazi concentration camps, who were persecuted for political reasons.

**December 11, 1998:** Decisions on the revised guidelines for applications in favor of Rom, Sinti and Yenish and on extended eligibility criteria for former concentration camp inmates persecuted for political reasons.

**December 18, 1998:** Start of the distributions to Jewish survivors in the Ukraine in presence of Rolf Bloch and Barbara Ekwall.

**January 15, 1999:** Press conference and penal charge by Roma National Congress in Bern. Investigations by the Fund Auditor at the accused organization show that the payments have been carried out correctly.

**March 10, 1999:** Plenary meeting of the Fund Executive in Zurich. Approval of different, in part very large applications. CHF 216 million or over 80% of the initial Fund means of CHF 273 million are allocated.

**April 12, 1999:** First payments in Opava, Czech Republic, to six disabled persons who have survived the Nazi “Euthanasia

Program”. In the presence of Ruth Grossenbacher, Chairperson of Insieme, and Barbara Ekwall.



**April 13, 1999:** Announcement of the distributions to Jewish survivors in Sydney, Australia, in presence of Rolf Bloch.

**April 14, 1999:** Distribution ceremony in Prag marking the beginning of the distributions to survivors of concentration camps persecuted for political reasons. In presence of Barbara Ekwall and Ruth Grossenbacher.

**April 30, 1999 :** Resignation of Rajko Djuric from the Fund Council and as President of the International Romani Union for health reasons.

**June 9, 1999:** Resignation of Robert Huber, President of the “Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse” from the Fund Council.

**July 28 and 29, 1999:** Start of the payments to 890 former prisoners of concentration camps persecuted for political reasons, and to a total of 1,745 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Russia, in presence of Barbara Ekwall.



**September 22, 1999:** Participation of Rolf Bloch at a seminar organized by the Jewish communities in Croatia on the impact of the Swiss Fund distributions.

**October 1, 1999:** Expiration of the deadline for the submission of applications to the Swiss Fund. Further applications can still be considered as justified “hardship cases” until the Fund means are fully exhausted.

**November 5, 1999:** First payments in Germany to 25 persons, victims of forced sterilization.

**November 1999:** Start of the payments in Poland to a total of 8,600 former prisoners of concentration camps persecuted for political reasons.

**November 30, 1999:** Meeting of the Fund Executive in Zurich. The age limit for for-

mer prisoners of concentration camps persecuted for political reasons is lifted. Decision on the consideration of Roma Nazi victims in the Ukraine. The Fund means are fully allocated.

**December 2, 1999:** Distribution ceremony in Moscow, Russia, on the occasion of payments to persons persecuted for political reasons, in presence of Barbara Ekwall.

**December 17, 1999:** Decision of the jurisdictional Court Bern Mittelland III not to follow up on the charges made by the National Roma Congress on January 15, 1999.

**March 2, 2000:** Meeting of sub-group II of the Fund Council. End of the work of the Fund Council with respect to recommendations on applications of victims’ organizations.

**March 9, 2000:** Meeting with media representatives in Warsaw, Poland, during a business trip of Barbara Ekwall.

**April 2000:** Start of the payments to approx. 124,000 Jewish survivors of the Holocaust in Israel. This was the most important country distribution program of Fund means.

**April 19, 2000:** Prolongation of the mandate of the members of the Fund Executive and the Fund Council until dissolution of the Fund.

**May 8, 2000:** Press conference in Bern. The representative of the Foundation “Polish-German Reconciliation” signs a Distribution Arrangement in favor of 15,000 beneficiaries, who were imprisoned in concentration camps for political reasons.

**May 30, 2000:** First payments to the “Righteous of the Nations”. Presence of Ambassador Jacques Reverdin, Elan Steinberg, Director of the Jewish World Congress, and Barbara Ekwall at the press conference in New York.



**August 18, 2000:** Start of the distribution of the Fund support to a total of 3,966 Roma survivors in the Ukraine in presence of Rolf Bloch and Barbara Ekwall.

**August 25, 2000:** Appointment of Noah Flug as a new member of the Fund Executive, succeeding Josef Burg, who passed away.

**November 5-8, 2000:** Visit of a delegation of the Fund Secretariat and of HEKS to Belgrade in order to solve different questions related to the distributions to Roma beneficiaries in Yugoslavia.

**November 22, 2000:** The Ambassador of Poland Marek Jedrys organizes a celebration in Bern in honor of the Swiss Fund.

**December 14, 2000:** Plenary meeting of the Fund Executive. Approval of the last applications and discussion concerning the recommendation to the Federal Council for the utilization of the residual means.

**January 4, 2001:** Start of the distributions to approx. 1,400 Roma beneficiaries in Yugoslavia.

**August 30, 2001:** Distribution of Fund means to Roma beneficiaries in Kosovo. These last payments, approved in summer 1998, had remained undistributed because of the war situation and the temporary collapse of postal delivery and banking services in the region.

**January 24, 2002:** Press meeting in Geneva organized by the Geneva Press Club. The President of the Fund Rolf Bloch and the Secretary General Barbara Ekwall present the work of the Fund.

**May 2, 2002:** Planned final meeting of the Fund Executive. Publication of the Final Report of the Swiss Fund.

**July 31, 2002:** Planned end of the work of the Fund and dissolution.

## Overview on Finances and Payments

Amounts in CHF \*

(per December 31, 2001)

### Status:

- The Fund has already decided on the allocation of about CHF 295 million. The whole initial Fund means of a total of CHF 273 million and almost all of the interests on the account in Switzerland of about CHF 25 million are attributed.
- Of the CHF 295 million that have already been allocated by the Fund Executive, over CHF 292 million were transferred to partner organizations to arrange the payments to the beneficiaries. An additional CHF 3 million of accrued interests on accounts abroad were made available for distributions.
- CHF 285 million of the transferred CHF 292 million are already paid to the beneficiaries.
- Needy Jewish survivors in Eastern Europe received about CHF 85 million, in the USA CHF 45 million and in Israel CHF 85 million.
- About CHF 46 million were paid to non-Jewish persons.
- The Federal Council will decide on the utilization of the residual means.

\* This overview contains some numbers that are rounded up. The differences on the change are only taken in consideration for closed applications.

## 1. Finances

### Overview on financial means in Switzerland

Income		Expenditure		Balance
Donations	273 140 315	Amounts paid	292 366 971	5 591 808
Interests and donations 1997-2001	<u>24 818 464</u>			
Total at disposal	297 958 779			

## 2. Approved and transferred

Beneficiaries	Number of beneficiaries	Transmitted to organization	Paid to beneficiaries
Jewish victims Eastern Europe	44 196	86 201 423	84 657 844
Jewish victims Israel	Approx. 124 000	86 610 398	84 821 133
Jewish victims Western Europe	11 818	19 990 432	16 937 139
Jewish victims USA	62 369	44 712 235	44 556 280
Jewish victims Australia/New Zealand	4 039	3 682 249	3 578 809
Jewish victims Canada	7 091	3 613 315	3 613 315
Jewish victims South America	1 081	862 822	860 751
Jewish victims South Africa	133	118 220	106 395
Jewish victims Africa	351	286 073	820
Righteous of Nations	1 649	3 475 872	2 935 553
Roma, Sinti, Yenish people	13 763	17 024 228	16 992 104
Political victims	41 326	25 405 860	25 323 268
Homosexuals	9	18 000	18 000
Jehova's Witnesses	69	104 012	104 000
Christians persecuted as Jews	103	73 979	73 979
Disabled persons, persons forcibly sterilized	218	187 853	181 434
<b>Total</b>	Approx. 312 215	292 366 971	284 760 824*

\* Differences result, because not all the distribution reports from the organizations have been received by the Swiss Fund. Undistributed means are returned to the Fund.

### Approved, paid from interests on accounts abroad:

Category of victim	Approved	Remarks
Jewish victims Eastern Europe	3 077 900	See above
Jewish victims Austria	38 864	See above
Righteous of Nations	54 097	See above
<b>Total</b>	3 170 861	

**Number of beneficiaries per region and category of victim (per 31.12.2001)**

Region	Jewish victims	Roma Sinti Yenish	Homosexuals			Total
			Political victims	Jehova's Witnesses Disabled persons/others	Righteous of Nations	
<b>Eastern Europe</b>						
Albania	3		144		15	162
Armenia			4			4
Bosnia	265	95			1	361
Bulgaria	1 186	90				1 276
Estonia		1	204			205
Georgia			12			12
Yugoslavia	830	1 314			25	2 171
Kazakhstan	31		13			44
Kirgistan			9			9
Croatia	959	90			12	1 061
Latvia	88	169			9	266
Lithuania	196			3	76	275
Macedonia		1				1
Moldova	516		26		3	545
Poland	1 825	1 795	23 889	57	944	28 510
Romania	5 853	210	2		7	6 072
Russia	2 519		4 188		14	6 721
Slovakia	1 496	53	37	13	25	1 624
Slovenia		1				1
Tadschikistan			1			1
Czech Republic	2 494	221	2 180	7	5	4 907
Turkmenistan			2			2
Ukraine	5 343	4 754	8 032	86	319	18 534
Hungary	19 859	299			70	20 228
Uzbekistan	17		9			26
Belarus	716	702	2 413	186	77	4 094
Intermediate total	44 196	9 795	41 167	352	1 602	97 112
<b>Europe</b>						
Denmark	214	2			1	217
Germany	1 328	3 506	19	35	2	4 890
Belgium	1 083	1			2	1 086
Finland		2				2
France	5 500	117		1	5	5 623
Greece	337				3	340
United Kingdom	998	5	1	1		1 005
Italia	740					741
Luxemburg	27				1	27
Holland	661	105				766
Norway	28	1				29
Austria	406	87		5		498
Sweden	407	128		1	1	537
Switzerland	74	4	1	2		81
Spain	15	1	38			54
Intermediate total	11 818	3 959	59	45	15	15 896

Region	Jewish victims	Roma Sinti Yenish	Homosexuals			Total
			Political victims	Jehova's Witnesses Disabled persons/others	Righteous of Nations	
<b>North America</b>						
USA	62 369	8	41		27	62 445
Canada	7 091	1	53		3	7 148
Intermediate total	69 460	9	94	0	30	69 593
<b>Israel</b>	124 000	0	0	0	0	124 000
<b>Latin America</b>						
Argentina	532					532
Bolivia	58					58
Brazil	181				1	182
Chile	44					44
Ecuador	2					2
Colombia	56					56
Mexico	97					97
Paraguay	1					1
Peru	31					31
Uruguay	24					24
Venezuela	55					55
Intermediate total	1 081	0	0	0	1	1 082
<b>Australia/ New Zealand</b>	4 039	0	6	0	1	4 046
<b>India</b>	0	0	0	2	0	2
<b>Africa</b>						
South Africa	133					133
Tunisia	350					350
Algeria	1					1
Intermediate total	484	0	0	0	0	484
<b>Total</b>	255 078	13 763	41 326	399	1 649	312 215

Bern, February 28, 2002

To the  
 Swiss Fund for Needy Victims  
 of the Holocaust/Shoa

The Fund Auditor was established as an independent organ of the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa (Swiss Fund) according to the Swiss Government Ordinance effective 1st March 1997 and stated in Article 8 (a):

**Art. 8: Auditor**

- 1 The Auditor monitors appropriate use of Fund assets in Switzerland as well as abroad and reviews financial reports.
- 2 A private auditing firm, independent of the administration and active internationally, will carry out the auditing duties.
- 3 It submits an annual report to the Federal Council. It will be made available to the Members of the Fund Executive and the Fund Council.

Ernst & Young (Fund Auditor), a Swiss firm with global partnerships around the world is one of the "Big 5" audit firms and submitted a proposal to fulfill the requirements of the ordinance and serve as Fund Auditor. We have served the Swiss Fund since its inception and it has indeed been a challenge. Our role was significantly more than that of the traditional auditor. In order to fulfill our task, we had to be on-site from the inception of the Swiss Fund's work in many of the countries. Our "monitoring work" in the various stages was considered to be vital to "monitor appropriate use of Fund assets in Switzerland and abroad".

**Monitoring Activities**

Our Monitoring Methodology was developed specifically for the needs of the Swiss Fund. The strategic priority of our monitoring was an ongoing pulse of determining the most urgent matters to be handled at a given point of time during the distributions. We naturally focus on the compliance with the criteria and the procedures defined by the Fund and the specific grant agreements. We provide periodic and ad-hoc reports with insight, concrete findings, emergency messages in some cases, and recommendations.

For many of the distributions, we performed a three-step-monitoring process:

*Proactive monitoring* was performed in the early stages to determine the viability of the organization or association in being able to handle a distribution as required by the proposed grant agreement of the Swiss Fund. *Interim monitoring* took place during the distribution to ensure that the infrastructure in place was effective and that the grant agreement was being followed on an on-going basis. *Final monitoring* was performed when a distribution was closed

and the approved beneficiaries were paid out according to the grant agreement. Any remaining funds have to be returned to the Swiss Fund and this return of funds and payments to beneficiaries was verified.

Our activities during on-site visits depended on whether we are in the "Proactive Monitoring", "Interim Monitoring", or "Final Monitoring" stage. However, all of the processes, namely application, decision, and distribution, are reviewed and discussed during the visit even if one or more of these phases have not yet commenced. The Fund Auditor performed on-site monitoring on all distributions that were of significance to the Swiss Fund, including:

- Distributions to Jewish beneficiaries in Belarus, Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, Poland, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, USA, that subsequently amounted to 225,815 approved beneficiaries (55 % of the total Jewish beneficiaries)
- Distributions to other beneficiaries in Belarus, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland, Russia, Switzerland, Ukraine, and Yugoslavia, that subsequently amounted to 52,116 approved beneficiaries (34 % of the total other beneficiaries).

The results of our monitoring are contained in the audit reports for the Swiss Fund. The results of our monitoring were, in general, very positive and concluded that the distributions were set-up and were in line with the meaning of the ordinance and the Grant Agreement. In some cases, recommendations were made and in all these cases, the Swiss Fund or the organization/association, as needed, took action.

In addition to these monitoring activities on-site, we also did desktop monitoring in our office or at the offices of the Swiss Fund. The Swiss Fund established a closing procedure for each application at the end of the distribution. The procedure included a signing of these closing documents by the Fund Auditor. If the closing documents were in crisis, the Fund Auditor issued a "Clearance to Close the File" for the application. This procedure was followed for each and every distribution of the Swiss Fund and was found to be in order.

**Auditing**

Since the commencement of the Holocaust Fund, we have performed an audit of the Swiss Fund. Our audit procedures were designed to provide a high level of assurance that the Swiss Fund's Annual Financial Statements are materially correct. To achieve this assurance, we have evaluated and tested the control mechanisms in place and, where appropriate, relied upon the Swiss Fund's internal controls. Transactions and supporting documentation were examined on a sample basis sufficient to enable us to achieve the desired degree of assurance.

In examining the Swiss Fund's annual accounts, our procedures focused upon satisfying ourselves that transactions have been:

- properly authorized
- executed as authorized
- accounted for as required.

*As statutory auditors, we have verified the financial statements (balance sheet, income statement) of the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa for the years ending December 31, 1999, 2000 and 2001 and have monitored the canonical use of the Swiss Fund's assets at home and abroad.*

*We confirm that we meet the legal requirements concerning professional qualification and independence.*

*We confirm that:*

- *the balance sheet and income statement correspond with the accounts kept by the Federal Finance Administration.*
- *the accounts are kept according to the rules.*
- *the Swiss Fund's assets at home and abroad have been used according to the Swiss Fund's purpose and the regulations of the decree of February 26, 1997 regarding the Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa.*

*In our opinion the financial statements and the use of the Swiss Fund's assets are in accordance with Swiss law and the ordinance.*

*In conclusion, our work has been an integral part of the Swiss Fund. We met many challenges along the way but none were insurmountable in meeting the overall purpose of the Swiss Fund – namely reaching needy victims of the Holocaust/Shoa. In many of the Eastern European countries, extensive pre-audit monitoring was performed in order to find viable solutions for the distributions yet taking into account the economic and business climate of the country. One overall solution could not be found in distributing these funds. All organs of the Swiss Fund were responsible for the success of the distribution especially the focused staff at the Swiss Fund Secretariat and their tireless efforts to find viable and sound solutions for all the challenges that were met.*

*We have been honored to have served the Swiss Fund in our capacity as Fund Auditor and feel that the purpose of the Swiss Fund has been fulfilled and that needy victims of the Holocaust/Shoa have benefited from the Swiss Fund.*

Sincerely yours,  
Ernst & Young



Urs Fahrenberg  
Partner



Katherine Garud  
Senior Manager

**Excerpts of the Address of the  
Ambassador of the Republic of Poland,  
Marek Jedrys, given on  
November 22, 2000**

It is true that there are still many old, help-  
less men and women living in Poland,  
whose lives would or could have been  
completely different had they not been  
affected by the tragedy of the Second  
World War and not been afflicted by the  
fate of the Holocaust.

Because of the very fact that they have  
been so utterly devastated by the fate they  
endured during the Second World War,  
they also belong at present to those in  
Poland who are unable – within the given  
setting of the new conditions  
– when radical economic transformation  
processes are unfolding in Poland, and  
– when Poland is in the midst of building  
a market economy – to seize the opportu-  
nities that this fundamental transforma-  
tion provides.

Thanks to the Swiss Fund, some of these  
people have received support. It is my  
conviction that the significance of this  
spontaneous financial assistance by far  
surpasses the material aspect, for indeed  
you have helped these persons strengthen  
their faith in human solidarity and in  
human readiness to lend a helping hand.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know that this  
financial assistance on the part of the Swiss  
Fund was perceived by the needy victims in  
my country as a genuine gesture of solidar-  
ity from Switzerland. The reactions –  
including letters sent to the foundation  
which distributed the money from the  
Swiss Fund in Poland – bear witness to this  
in an eloquent manner.

The work of the Swiss Fund for Needy  
Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa, which is  
slowly coming to a conclusion, compels  
me to express my gratitude to all of those  
thanks to whom the Swiss Fund came to  
be and was able to carry out its noble  
mission.

My thanks go out to the Federal Council.  
My thanks go out to the donors:  
to the Swiss National Bank, to the other  
banks, the insurance companies, and to  
the Swiss economy.

I should also like to express my profound  
gratitude to the Swiss Fund, to all of the  
members of the Fund Executive and the  
Fund Council, and above all to the Fund  
President, Rolf Bloch and the Fund's  
Secretary General, Barbara Ekwall. Their  
toil, personal commitment, and untiring  
efforts in carrying out the distribution of  
the Fund endowment as rapidly as possi-  
ble and, at the same time, correctly and in  
accordance with the criteria established,  
deserve our greatest respect.



## Executive Ordinance Concerning the Special Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa

The Swiss Federal Council, in agreement with the donors and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO) [1] in special association with the State of Israel as umbrella organization to represent the Jewish People in matters of restitution, and in accordance with organizations of non-Jewish victims and beneficiaries, based on Article 12, Paragraph 2, of the Federal Law of October 6, 1989 on the Federal Budget (FHG), decrees:

### Art. 1 Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa

A Special Fund according to Article 12 of the Budget Law exists under the name "Fund for Needy Victims of the Holocaust/Shoa" (hereafter: Fund).

### Art. 2 Purpose

The object of the Fund is to support persons in need who were persecuted for reasons of their race, religion or political views or for other reasons, or otherwise were victims of the Holocaust/Shoa, as well as to support their descendants in need.

### Art. 3 Organs of the Fund

The administrative organs of the Fund are:

a. the Fund Executive; b. the Fund Council; c. the Fund Secretariat; d. the Fund Auditor.

### Art. 4 The Fund Executive (composition and tasks)

1 The Fund Executive is composed of seven members, consisting of four Swiss eminent persons, among them the President, and three eminent persons recommended by the WJRO [2].

2 The Federal Council appoints the President and the members of the Fund Executive. The term of office is three years; reelection is possible.

#### 3 The Fund Executive

a. decides on recommendations of the Fund Council on the use of means within the framework of the Fund's purpose; b. adopts the rules of procedure and the required regulations to the extent that such regulation is needed to supplement and implement; c. designates the auditor; d. presents regular reports to the Federal Council on its activity; e. informs the public on Fund activity.

### Art. 5 The Fund Council (composition and tasks)

1 The Fund Council is composed of 18 members, among them representatives of domestic and foreign institutions and organizations which are dedicated in special ways to serving the interests of the beneficiaries.

2 The Federal Council appoints the members of the Fund Council, nine of which are recommended by the WJRO. The Fund Council constitutes itself. The term of office is three years; reelection is possible.

3 The Fund Council shall advise the Fund Executive on criteria and applications.

### Art. 6 The Fund Secretariat

The Fund Secretariat carries out the administrative work and prepares the business of the Fund Executive and the Fund Council.

### Art. 7 Services

1 The Fund provides one-time or repeated financial services to persons who need help or support in special ways.

2 Applications for services are to be directed to institutions and organizations devoted to the interests of the beneficiaries. Any organization devoted to the purposes of the Fund in accordance with Art. 2 can apply to the mechanisms of the Fund.

### Art. 8 Auditor

1 The Auditor monitors appropriate use of Fund assets in Switzerland as well as abroad and reviews financial reports.

2 A private auditing firm, independent of the administration and active internationally, will carry out the auditing duties.

3 It submits an annual report to the Federal Council. It will be made available to the Members of the Fund Executive and the Fund Council.

### Art. 9 Monitoring Supervision

1 The Federal Council exercises oversight over the Fund.

2 The Federal Council can inspect the Fund's activities at any time.

### Art. 10 Dissolving the Fund

The Federal Council can, after consultation with the Fund Executive and the Fund Council, transfer the residue of the Fund to a permanent institution having the same or a similar purpose, as soon as such an institution has been established.

### Art. 11 Effective Date

This ordinance takes effect on March 1, 1997.

#### Footnotes

[1] In alliance with its nine member organizations: World Jewish Congress; Agudath Israel World Organization; American Gathering / Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors; American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee; Bnai Brith International; Center of Organizations of Holocaust Survivors in Israel; Conference of Jewish Material Claims Against Germany; Jewish Agency for Israel; World Zionist Organization.

[2] One from outside Israel, one from Israel and one representing survivor organizations.

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**Text:** Barbara Ekwall, Swiss Fund for Needy Victims of the  
Holocaust/Shoa, Berne

**Consulting, Artwork and Realization:** Burson-Marsteller, Berne

**Editorial office:** text control ag, Zurich

**English translation:** Gary Fliszar, Fribourg

**Lithos:** Denz Lith-Art AG, Berne

**Printing:** Stämpfli AG, Berne

**Distribution:** SFBL, Distribution of Publications, CH-3003 Berne, N° 601.036.eng  
[www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen](http://www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen)

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Printed in Switzerland, 2002