

'War crimes' hunt to continue in Australia

by Don Veitch

At the end of World War II, Australia became a haven for millions of refugees fleeing war-torn Europe and the nightmare of Nazi and Soviet police states. Australia was a safe and peaceful home for many years for these new citizens. However, beginning in 1979 and reaching a crescendo in 1986, accusations were made that these migrant communities harbored Nazi war criminals. The Australian government responded quickly and vigorously to these accusations and conducted a seven-year campaign to hunt the Nazis.

Over 800 Australian citizens, primarily from Ukraine and the Baltic nations, were investigated by a Special Investigation Unit (SIU). Only one case proceeded to trial. In May 1993, after a three-year investigation, Ivan Polyhukovick, a 72-year-old pensioner from South Australia, was exonerated of all charges after the jury deliberated for less than one hour.

As *EIR* has documented in the case of John Demjanjuk and others, the self-proclaimed Nazi-hunters are in many cases targeting innocent people, using "evidence" manufactured by the Soviet KGB, the Israeli Mossad, and other such politically motivated sources.

In the case of Australia, failure to convict Polyhukovick has not ended the campaign, and prosecutors have reaffirmed their intention to pursue cases. The head of the Zionist Federation in Australia, Mark Leibler (brother of World Zionist Congress Co-Chairman Isi Leibler), says that the failure to convict in no way diminishes the need for continued prosecutions.

Foreign governments involved

Since 1986, generous resources have been directed to investigating allegations that Nazis were hiding in Australia. The campaign involved cooperation of the Australian government with Israel, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the Soviet bloc. The files of the U.S.-based Simon Wiesenthal Center and the resources of the Australian Jewish community were utilized to provide the names of suspects. There was a well-funded, broad-ranging inquiry led by Andrew Menzies, Order of the British Empire, leading to the establishment of the Special Investigation Unit. This process took over seven years and cost about \$40 million. Efram Zuroff of the Simon Wiesenthal Center lavished praise on the SIU.

In April 1986, the Australian government-funded network ABC produced radio and television programs repeating the claims that hundreds of Nazi war criminals were hiding

in Australia. The programs were prepared by Mark Aarons, a prominent member of the Communist Party of Australia. Aarons also published a book, *Sanctuary: Nazi Fugitives in Australia*. According to him, the sources for his information included Sam Goldbloom (of the notorious Soviet front the World Peace Congress, Novosti Press Agency in Moscow) and John Loftus, an official of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI). Isi Leibler wrote the preface for Aarons's book.

The Menzies Inquiry

The Menzies Inquiry was set up by the government to review the allegations made by Aarons. In his final report, Menzies highlighted the cooperation he had received from the Australian intelligence organization (ASIO), the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and the American OSI. Members of the Menzies team traveled to the U.K. and spoke to the Foreign Office and Cabinet Office, which were "most helpful in providing access to documents which threw new light on Nazis in Australia."

The importance of the OSI as a model for the establishment of the SIU is highlighted by the visit of the director of the OSI, Neal Sher, to Australia, at the time the Menzies Inquiry was considering the evidence. Sher gave Menzies "considerable assistance," said Menzies. Former OSI officials such as Eli Rosenbaum visited Australia to develop the campaign further. Rosenbaum is now an official of the World Jewish Congress.

The OSI is now itself under U.S. investigation for allegations that it doctored evidence and used KGB disinformation to railroad innocent people.

The Menzies Inquiry found that it was more than likely that war criminals had entered Australia and were still living there. A sealed envelope with a short list for prosecution was handed to then-Prime Minister Bob Hawke. A small unit "along the lines of the OSI" was to be established, and Menzies proposed that the unit should have responsibility for investigating "the allegations received by the government from the Simon Wiesenthal Center in the U.S.A. and Israel."

Despite the vigor of the campaign and the resources spent, the failure to convict anybody has brought disappointment to the self-proclaimed Nazi hunters. In March 1992, Prime Minister Paul Keating quickly wound up the SIU, at the time that the allegations against the OSI were being raised. Efram Zuroff, coordinator of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's Nazi war crime investigations unit, claimed, after the exoneration of Polyhukovick, that lack of budgetary resources was the cause of the failure to convict. Zuroff now claims he has 90 more targets for prosecution, but says he will not hand them over to the government, since "nothing will be done about Nazi war criminals in Australia." He told Conrad Black's *Sydney Morning Herald* that he intends to come to Australia himself to whip up public opinion, to force the government to reopen the SIU.