

WWII archives attract skepticism

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Nazi hunters sifting Russian, European and Argentine archives to unmask aging war criminals in the United States fear the newly available dossiers will ultimately serve history, but not justice.

Investigators are poring over archives throughout Eastern Europe and in provincial capitals in the former Soviet Union that were off-limits during the Cold War.

And last month, Argentine President Carlos Menem released files to the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center about Nazis who fled to Argentina after World War II.

What researchers are finding will add detail to Nazi atrocities and the fate of thousands who disappeared in the Holocaust. But the archives may be of limited use to prosecutors.

"We must move with dispatch, because time is against justice," said Martin Mendelsohn, legal counsel to the Wiesenthal Center and former chief of the Justice Department's Nazi-hunting unit.

Nazi hunters claim evidence benefits history, not justice

Brewster Chamberlin, archives director of the new United States Holocaust Museum in Washington, has microfilmed documents in Latvia, Moscow, Ukraine, Byelorussia, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and eastern Germany. The museum will have 1 million documents on the Holocaust when it opens next year.

Included are faded photographs, yellowed papers, records on Nazi death squads, population counts for Jewish ghettos and concentration camps, transportation orders and notations on the sale of Jewish property.

The archives also promise to shed light on the fate of Gypsies, resistance fighters, Jehovah's Witnesses and others persecuted in Central and Eastern Europe.

Chamberlin said.

But, he said: "The fate or destiny of those who participated generally is not shown unless they were killed in carrying out their horrid duties."

Allan Ryan Jr., a former chief of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, estimates 10,000 war criminals, including prison guards, their superiors and collaborators, were among 400,000 refugees who came to the United States between 1948 and 1952.

Since it was founded in 1979, the office has obtained orders to deport only 30 alleged war criminals from the United States. Prosecutions by the office based on the new information are unlikely, Ryan said.

"The trail grows cold. Witness-

es die," said Ryan, now a Harvard University attorney. "Cases that could be made in 1950 can't be made (today). And the burden of proof against the government is very high."

The office refuses to comment on its hundreds of active cases.

In February, Wiesenthal investigators got hold of Argentine files on Nazis who fled there after the war, including Josef Mengele. The "Angel of Death" at the Auschwitz concentration camp is believed to have died in Brazil in 1979.

The files have yet to provide information on possible criminals in the United States, acknowledged Rabbi Abraham Cooper, dean of the Wiesenthal Center. But Menem's decision to make them public nonetheless has had a significant effect.

"Every time you have a historic move by someone like President Menem, it takes the wind out of the sails of the Holocaust deniers," Cooper said.

Arabs ask U.N. to help settle extradition crisis

CAIRO, Egypt (AP) — Arab foreign ministers on Sunday turned down Libya's request that they ignore sanctions Western countries have threatened to apply against Libya in connection with the bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

The foreign ministers, representing the 21-member Arab League, instead urged the United Nations to solve the dispute through mediation.

The December 1988 bombing killed 270 people. The United States and Britain are demanding the extradition of two Libyans indicted in the case.

Libya's refusal to hand over the two officials alleged to have been involved in the bombing has sparked increasing tensions.

The United States, France, Germany, Switzerland, Greece and

Italy have urged their citizens in Libya to leave.

Winding up its emergency session Sunday, the Arab League ministers adopted a resolution calling on the U.N. Security Council to "avoid taking any economic, military or diplomatic measures that could have negative consequences on the region."

The resolution said the council should await the outcome of an International Court of Justice appeal filed by Libya on March 3.

The ministers reaffirmed their condemnation of all forms of terrorism and "welcomed Libya's readiness to cooperate with any international efforts to end this phenomenon."

They promised to exert efforts on all levels to avert any threats against Libya and try to solve the problem through peaceful means.

List of campaign promises stretches as election nears

NEW HAVEN, Conn. (AP) — Politicians are usually adept at promising voters what they want to hear. Critics may call it pandering, but it has become part of every campaign. This year, the promises list is long and growing.

Democratic front-runner Bill Clinton, campaigning across Connecticut for Tuesday's primary, has criticized the Bush administration for moving to scrap contracts for the Seawolf submarine, built in Groton.

That seems to conflict with Clinton's general call for cuts in defense spending. But the cut, contained in Bush's budget, would result in the layoffs of thousands of Connecticut workers and has become an emotional political issue.

Former Sen. Paul Tsongas of Massachusetts, before he withdrew from the race last week, criticized Clinton for "pandering" to Connecticut voters and suggested that the submarine would be killed under any post-Cold War program.

"It is not pandering," Clinton insisted Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." He said he had consulted with "a wide range of defense advisers" before deciding to favor the submarine.

He said Bush's proposal to kill the Seawolf was "a clear example of his insensitivity... he's going to throw all those people on the street."

Former California Gov. Jerry Brown has also attacked Clinton on the Seawolf issue as he wages his own unconventional campaign here. He told a rally that the odds of Clinton actually preserving Seawolf if he were elected is "about the same as his selecting (Connecticut Sen.) Joe Lieberman for vice president."

Of course, in the promises department, Brown does not do so badly himself.

After a campaign rally in Bridgeport, a supporter asked Brown if he would "reopen the investigation of the assassination of JFK so we can really find out who killed our president?"

Brown paused a moment, then said: "Yeah. Sure. That's an easy one."

And in the "pandering" department, it is Brown who wore a United Auto Workers windbreaker throughout his Michigan campaign.

Clinton has accused Brown of "reinventing himself" through the years.

President Bush, who has the highest profile of any candidate for broken campaign promises with his abandoned "no new taxes" pledge, is no slacker in the pandering department this campaign season.

He had been announcing a string of federal programs that benefit primary states before he finally all but flattened GOP challenger Patrick Buchanan in last week's Michigan primary.

Thus, when he was in Oklahoma earlier this month he announced a program to help the oil and gas industry. And, later, a few days before last week's Michigan primary, he announced a regulatory relief program for the auto industry.

Campaign officials have even been sending "pander patrol" aides to brief reporters and to explain why federal largesse bestowed by Bush on key primary states is really completely, wholly, utterly nonpolitical.

Sometimes, even the politicians aren't quite sure of whether they've been pandering or not. At a New York news conference, Clinton was asked to defend himself on criticism that he was cozying up to Israel in a bid to win the support of Jewish voters.

Czechs, Slovaks travel destructive path

BRATISLAVA, Czechoslovakia (AP) — It was, after all, too good to be true: the poet-prince delivering his country in a storybook revolution from communism into a golden age of wisdom and love.

Two years later, President Vaclav Havel presides over a land mired in poverty and separatism.

Even though few want the country to disintegrate, Czechs and Slovaks are on a path that could lead them there, and they seem to lack the will to get off.

Months of meetings have produced only confusion, paralysis and foreboding.

Communication is minimal. Czechs and Slovaks rarely buy each other's newspapers or watch each other's television, and report sensationally on the other's affairs.

June elections appear crucial, but the two men likely to win in their regions are as different from each other as from the high-minded

Havel.

Vaclav Klaus, the federal finance minister, is a conservative Czech economist. The Slovak leader, Vladimir Meciar, is a populist.

There also are enormous differences between the 10 million Czechs and five million Slovaks.

Czech traditions embrace 15th century Hussite Protestantism, early industrial development, Franz Kafka and Havel, the dissident playwright who became president.

Slovaks have known only outside domination. Their heavy industries, including the country's arms factories, were built or greatly expanded under communism.

As Klaus reforms the economy, Slovak unemployment has swollen to 12.4 percent. Joblessness in the Czech lands is 4.7 percent and dropping.

After centuries of domination by Hungary, Slovaks united with the Czechs in 1918. With

an inglorious interlude as a Nazi puppet state they have felt dominated by the Czechs.

Some radicals want independence, but polls indicate they are a small minority. However, Slovaks are angered by what they see as Prague's indifference.

"The Czechs cannot put the question the way: Either this kind of federation, or we split," declared Rudolf Filkus, an economist and leading member of Meciar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia.

Exhaustive talks on how to rebuild the federation foundered on Slovak demands for sovereignty and Czech doubts about Slovakia's commitment to market reform.

Slovakia's premier, Jan Carnogursky, heads a coalition too divided to govern effectively. When he tried to push through an agreement on Czechoslovakia's future, his own Christian Democratic Party rejected it and ultimately split.

Economic comeback leaves China in debt, officials say

BEIJING (AP) — China's economy rebounded in 1991 from a three-year slump but the government paid the price in a record budget deficit and higher inflation, officials said Saturday.

In separate reports to the national legislature, Finance Minister Wang Bingqian and Vice Premier Zou Jiahua proposed more borrowing and investment in 1992.

Wang also called for increasing the military budget by 12 percent, to \$6.7 billion, the third consecutive annual increase.

Zou warned against pumping too much money into the economy.

"There is too much credit and currency in circulation and latent inflationary pressure still exists," said Zou.

Zou heads the State Planning Commission, which sets quotas and allocates supplies in a nation where central planning plays a bigger role than market forces.

China's gross national product grew seven percent in 1991 to \$359 billion while many developed countries suffered recessions, the officials reported.

Cuts to pension funds threaten stable future

State and local governments that scrounge for money by cutting contributions to their pension funds may be setting a costly time bomb for Americans early in the next century.

Government work traditionally has promised the public servant job security and a dandy pension. But investment experts say stinging on pension funds today only leaves a big tab for the taxpayers of tomorrow.

If that tab is not paid, ex-garbage collectors and ex-governors could eventually be left scrimping.

"This is an unusual issue in our society, because people who are being hurt don't scream," said Sarah Teslik, executive director of the Council of Institutional Investors, a Washington lobbying group representing 70 of the country's largest public funds.

Kenneth Codlin does not scream. He sounds a warning. "It is tomorrow's problem, but it's tomorrow's huge problem," said Codlin, chief investment officer of Illinois' State Universities Retirement System.

He figures his chronically shortchanged \$4.5 billion fund, currently paying out \$250 million

in pensions, will start to run out of money in about 2015 when up to 50,000 retirees start tapping their nest egg for \$2 billion a year.

The pinching of pensions takes many forms:

- In California, investments by the \$64.3 billion Public Employees Retirement System were so lucrative, Gov. Pete Wilson decided last year to take back a \$1.9 billion chunk he considered a surplus. Unions are challenging the action in court and with a referendum campaign to get the money back.

- Philadelphia last year briefly borrowed \$150 million from its employees' pension fund and repaid it — with a hefty 11 percent interest straight out of tax revenues.

- Oklahoma's retirement fund for teachers is slowly sinking. It has \$2.1 billion in assets but needs more like \$5.3 billion to avoid a bankruptcy forecast for around 2015.

- Maine has not contributed enough to its pension system since the 1950s, officials say. This year caught in a budget crisis, the legislature put off paying \$87 million in contributions.

They will be paid with interest over the next two decades.

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