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Press Release No. 01-13

04.01.2013

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Wave of Lawsuits against the Deutsche Bahn AG

"Reichsbahn" Survivors Challenge Germany – Lufthansa also Implicated

The Nazi "Reichsbahn's" successor, the Deutsche Bahn AG (DB AG), is facing a wave of lawsuits by several thousand victims of Nazi mass deportations. A survivor, who was 17 years old, when he was captured in the Ukraine and was later deported by the Nazi "Reichsbahn" to Germany, where he served as forced laborer, is the first plaintiff.

The lawsuit was filed, under condition of financial aid for court costs, December 31, 2012, in Frankfurt am Main. The "Reichsbahn's" victims' have been seeking a consensual agreement for settling their claims for years, but the DB AG has consistently refused. The DB AG considers itself guiltless, because it was founded only in 1994.

Alongside the DB AG, the German Lufthansa is also implicated in the lawsuit. The Lufthansa's predecessor, the Nazi "Lufthansa," forced the Ukrainian plaintiff to work in labor battalions, after his abduction to Germany. The plaintiff argues that both Nazi enterprises (the "Deutsche Reichsbahn" and "Deutsche Lufthansa") were accomplices in the crimes, by knowingly committing mass deportations to provide cheap labor for the German war industry.

As stated in the text of the lawsuit, under the Nazis, the "Lufthansa" used even deported children, who, because of their small size, were made to do the riveting work in the close quarters of the wing sections. The "Reichsbahn" transported hundreds of thousands children and youth, who did not qualify for similar work, to concentration and extermination camps, where they were murdered.

The 88-year-old plaintiff is demanding that the DB AG pay damages of at least 200 thousand Euros and sets the Nazi "Lufthansa" a back wage of 26 Euros for each hour that he had been forced to work.

In the past, similar claims had been denied because the defendant company had paid into the Foundation "Remembrance, Responsibility and Future" fund, created by the German industry. The plaintiff casts doubt on this foundation. On various occasions, the foundation has been accused of being engaged in a sort of sale of indulgences at the expense of the Nazis' victims. Most recently, the presidium of the foundation was criticized for its alleged collaboration with the Deutsche Bahn AG.

Independently of this suit in Frankfurt, the "Reichsbahn's" victims are initiating a class action lawsuit in the USA.

Members of the U.S. Congress are preparing a bill to oblige Nazi enterprises' successor companies to publicly declare the receipts acquired through complicity in Nazi crimes. If they refuse redemption, the companies will not be allowed to bid for government contracts. Since the DB AG is a leading enterprise in the USA, it would be directly affected by this resolution.

According to "Train of Commemoration" calculations, the DB AG's property funds include at least 445 million Euros (current value) from its complicity in Nazi crimes. With interest, this would correspond to more than 2 billion Euros.

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(Mr Minow)