

PREPARED TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPH MEILI

(1997)

Former Security Guard Union Bank of Switzerland
Hearing on Shredding of Holocaust Era Documents
2:00 p.m., Tuesday, May 6, 1997

Declaration

I, Christoph Meili, born on April 21, 1968, domiciled at 38d Steinstrasse, 5406 Rütihof, Switzerland, declare:

I have been employed by Wache AG in Zurich as a night watchman for about three years. For the past year and a half, I have been working in this capacity at SBG, Schweizerische Bankgesellschaft headquartered at 45 Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich.

My job there was guarding the construction site of the current rebuilding project. In addition, I also had other guard responsibilities. I had to be very closely acquainted with all locations in this assignment so as to be able to perform the security tasks in case of an emergency.

On January 8 at 4:30 P.M. I started my rounds in the main building. I noticed two full pushcarts in the shredding room. I noticed them because the overfilled carts were obviously filled with very old documents and books. On the very top, I saw an old green A2 sized book with the title "Management Minutes" and inscribed with the years around 1916/1917. Even though I was surprised, I left the documents alone and continued my rounds. Because of the continuing press reports regarding the questions of old banking records, I returned after about three minutes to the shredding room. I put some books on the conveyor belt to get a fuller picture. I saw the following titles, as far as I can remember: Federal Bank, National Bank, Bankgesellschaft years 1870-1926.

Then I also saw two thick black-bound books about A-3 size, which had debit and credit columns. The years 1945-1965 was written on the cover. I opened one of the books and saw entries starting February 1945. Many German chemical companies. At that point, I recognized immediately that the entries starting February 1945 were still during World War II. Since there were many German firms, I looked at some of entries more closely.

I saw companies with names like, Lack und Farbenfabriken, Seifenfabriken, Bayerische Sodafabrik., etc. The first entry was "Fr. 1,00"; later the sums were bigger, for example:

Name 1.00

44,000.00

I found many entries in the real estate column for 1930-1945. Additional entries were made there regarding bankruptcy auctions.

The above books were divided in about five different categories: bonds, stocks, miscellaneous, real estate. Because of the sensitive dates, I ripped out the entire real estate part from both books. I replaced the books so that no one would notice anything. I brought the real estate pages and a book dated 1920-1926 to my locker in two trips, finished my job dutifully, and took the real estate pages home with me. There I inspected them with great curiosity.

After I realized that old banking records and documents were to be destroyed here, while they really belonged in Archives, and because of the persistent discussion about the Second World War and about banking records pertaining to it, I wanted to find out on the following day whether the documents and books had been destroyed.

On Thursday, January 9 1997, at about 2:30 PM, I went straight to the shredding room to see if the books had been actually destroyed.

The carts were in the shredding room, empty. I found refuse and covers from the above books, in a metal container in the shredding room. By this I mean the above green and black books.

In a metal container outside the shredding room, I found two additional books from 1891-1893 under two garbage-bags. I took the books to my locker in two trips. I took the 1920-1926 book home after I finished work at 10:30 P.M. It contained loans to, among others, German companies, starting in 1923.

I was convinced that documents were being destroyed illegally, I wished to prevent the Swiss people from suffering harm and to make the documents and actions known to the public. I also wanted the oppressed Jewish population, the Holocaust victims to not again be left behind in their search for documentation at the Swiss banks and get justice. I had the impression that parts of the materials being searched for were being destroyed there.

I tried to give the books to the Israeli Embassy. When I called, I was told to put the books in the mail. That seemed too risky to me, and I tried the Israeli Cultural Association. I was able to stop by there and hand over the books. The Cultural Association called on the following day, and they stopped by. I was told that this material was now with the police.

I went public about this matter because I want to testify to everyone regarding this matter in the interests of Switzerland. I have not been directed by anyone; I acted on my own decision; and I have no intention of profiting from this action.

The correctness of my actions as a Swiss citizen is also made credible by the fact that one of the books saved, records the construction of the first Gotthard railroad tunnel. These documents certainly belong in the National Archives.

In addition, I have discovered that the documents to be destroyed originated in a time period from which no documents are supposed to be destroyed.

I, Christoph Meili, affirm, assure and declare that the above declaration is complete and exact according to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I am aware of the legal consequences of perjury according to the laws of the United States of America.