

Canadian 'Nazi' case ends in failure

by John Beverley Robinson

On May 25, Canada's first war crimes trial ended when a jury acquitted Imre Finta, a 77-year-old Hungarian-Canadian restaurant owner of Toronto, of all charges against him. Finta had been charged with manslaughter, confinement, kidnapping, and robbery in connection with the deportation of 8,000 Jews from Hungary to Poland in June 1944. Following his acquittal, Finta stated that he had always claimed that he was "100% innocent." "I'm a Bohemian, a show-business man, not a murderer," he added.

Unfortunately, show-business was precisely what this six-month trial was all about. Among the trial audience were several neo-Nazis, of whom the Canadian intelligence-linked Ernst Zundel was among the most well known. They took the occasion to deny the Jewish Holocaust outright, along the lines that Auschwitz had swimming pools. Naturally, such provocateurs only further inflamed the already deeply manipulated Jewish World War II survivors who attended the trial daily.

Following the acquittal, Sol Littman, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Toronto, one of the local manipulators of the Jewish community, told the *Toronto Globe and Mail* that a criminal trial in Canada is not the most effective way to pursue war-crimes trials. Canadian law allows "the defense to exhaust the jury," he complained. Littman told the *Globe* he would prefer to deport Nazis back to Russia and Eastern Europe—countries unbound by the jury system.

The real agenda

The Finta case was the result of a years-long effort to establish a Canadian version of the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, its "Nazi-hunting" arm. It had nothing to do with concerns for justice, or "Nazi hunting" per se. The campaign had been nationally led by the Canadian branch of the Wiesenthal Center and the Canadian Jewish Congress. Both organizations are under the control of the Canadian-American liquor baron and World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman. Bronfman and his WJC had earlier been instrumental in forming the OSI.

The OSI was formed in 1979 on the basis of agreements that had been originally struck between then-Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko back in 1971. Under the terms of the agreement,

U.S. "Nazi hunting" in the West would rely on Soviet evidence and strike at Soviet-designated targets. Quite obviously, the targets tended to be anti-communist activists in the Eastern European community, some with important networks back home. The OSI, in short, was intended to aid the process which culminated in the U.S.-Soviet "condominium" arrangements made at the 1989 Malta summit. The Bronfmans have served as key intermediaries in preparing this condominium arrangement.

Since the establishment of the OSI, there have been periodic efforts to establish similar organizations elsewhere, including in New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain. The British House of Lords voted last spring that there was no need to establish such prosecutorial organizations. In 1987, the Canadian government finally agreed to try "Nazi fugitive" cases. The Finta case was their first.

Preparing the propaganda

Canada's recent witchhunt began back in 1985, when Littman claimed that he had evidence that fugitive Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele was secretly in Canada. Former Solicitor General of Canada Robert Kaplan, also a member of the Canadian Jewish Congress, then raised Littman's unsubstantiated charges in the House of Commons. This proved to be an embarrassment when it was later shown that Mengele was dead, not holed out somewhere in the Canadian backwoods. Littman also claimed that there were 3,000 other Nazis loose in the country.

Two weeks after Littman's charges, the minister of justice announced the creation of an independent "Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals" led by Judge Jules Deschenes of the Superior Court of Quebec, to see if a Canadian version of the OSI were necessary.

Unfortunately for the Bronfmans, the Deschenes Commission did not entirely buckle under to the hysteria, and, in its final report, ridiculed Littman's "loose language" and "careless public statements." The report established that after a thorough investigation, the commission could only come up with a master list of 774 eventual suspects among the hundreds of thousands of Europeans who had emigrated to Canada since the war. Of those 774, the commission found *prima facie* proof of war crimes in only 20 cases.

The commission did recommend certain modifications of the Canadian criminal code, but it did not agree to deportation of supposed Nazis to Eastern Europe. It argued that if any trials were to occur, they should occur in Canada. The Canadian government's acceptance of the recommendations provoked sharp denunciations from former U.S. congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, who had worked with the Bronfmans to establish the OSI. Apparently, she feared, justice might be served:

The result of the Finta trial extravaganza may lead some to conclude that justice is best served by not selecting legal targets based on a hidden political agenda.