



The Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth [reports](#) that the resources of a Nazi forced labor compensation fund are being used to finance anti-Israel activities, some of which are clearly anti-Semitic.

The German fund "Memory, Responsibility and Future" was established 11 years ago to compensate Nazi victims who were subjected to forced labor during World War II. But a booklet including anti-Semitic propaganda and drawings was sponsored by the fund and prepared at the end of a student exchange program between high school students from Nazareth and students from an eastern German city.

The booklet allegedly tries to examine and compare the educational rights of young Germans and Israeli Arabs. In practice, it includes blatant anti-Semitic incitement questioning the State of Israel's right to exist.

One of the drawings, for example, compares between a classroom in a "Jewish school" and a "Palestinian" classroom. In the "Jewish" classroom, five children with side-locks and skullcaps are seen sitting comfortably at spacious tables. The "Palestinian" classroom is packed with dozens of children and has cobwebs on the walls and narrow tables.

Another drawing shows two young men in the "Holy Land": A white one (Jew) and a

dark-skinned one (Arab). The Jew, standing in front of a tank, asks the Arab to be his friend, and the Arab has no choice but to say "yes".

The booklet's texts – in German, English and Arabic – take the same line. While the English texts usually talk about "Israel", the Arabic texts discuss "Palestine" and compare its division to the division of Germany.

"Memory, Responsibility and Future" is a joint fund of the German industry and government. Since its establishment, the fund has transferred relatively small amounts of money to forced laborers who were still alive 60 years after the end of the war. The remaining funds have been allotted to "projects commemorating Nazi victims, maintaining human rights and understanding between nations."

Maybe this lack of interest in the actual victims that the fund was supposed to help is [not surprising](#) given the actual reasons for its establishment. With the collapse of the Stalinist Eastern European states and the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, legal barriers were removed which prevented former forced laborers from making valid compensation claims.

Between 1942 and 1944 alone, the Nazi army deported more than 2.5 million people—20,000 per week—from the Soviet Union. More than one quarter of all those employed in the German Reich were forced laborers. In the late summer of 1944, 7.6 million foreign civilian workers and prisoners of war were officially said to be employed within the territory of the 'Great German Reich', who had largely been forcefully put to work in the Reich"

Following German reunification in 1990, model legal actions in German courts were made by former Eastern European slave laborers. A ground-breaking ruling by the German Supreme Court in 1996 finally decided that, while no legal liability existed on the part of the federal government, private legal actions were possible. These became a serious annoyance when class action suits were filed in the US and appeals for a boycott of German business in America became ever louder. The test of strength between former concentration camp victims and the Swiss banks also precluded ignoring the matter any longer. German business only now discovered its "moral responsibility", and set about establishing the foundation.

On July 17, 2000 the compensation agreement for former concentration camp laborers was signed. The basis of the present agreement is the law passed by the Bundestag (German parliament) on July 6, 2000 establishing the foundation Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft (“Memory, responsibility and future”), which was set to receive 10 billion marks (\$5 billion). Moreover, a German-American intergovernmental agreement was sealed, establishing the “persistent, high interests of the United States ... to support all efforts to conclude cases from the Second World War”.

With this “statement of interest” by the American government, German enterprises achieved the most extensive protection from future actions that was legally possible. The central point is the recommendation that American courts reject all future plaintiffs. The German fund will retain exclusive rights to deal with compensation demands.

Therefore, the real motivation for the negotiations was not the “acknowledgement of the political and moral responsibility for the victims of National Socialism” (as presented in the preamble to the law) which led to the initiation of the debate over compensation. Rather, it had become troublesome for the German economic interests—represented strongly on the American market—for their business to be impeded by the memory of former crimes.

So as part of our reality, government decisions are not always what they claim to be. A fund for helping compensate forced labor workers was actually a means to help Germany industry. So it is no wonder that the money is used for other causes including the promulgation of hate.