

**Theft of the "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign update**

WARSAW, Poland — A November 25 article by Vanessa Gera of the Associated Press tells of: Polish prosecutors filed charges Thursday against a Swede with neo-Nazi ties and two Poles acting for profit and said all three had confessed to the brazen theft of the notorious "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign from the gates of the Nazi's Auschwitz death camp last year.

They also announced that a second Swede, whose name was not released, is suspected of masterminding the robbery and investigators in Sweden will now work to shed light on his role, of which the public has so far known nothing.

"In our investigation we have uncovered evidence indicating the possibility that a Swedish citizen on Sweden's territory might have instigated another Swedish citizen to commit a crime connected with the theft of the 'Arbeit Macht Frei' sign," prosecutor Robert Parys said.

Prosecutors filed the charges Thursday with a court in Krakow. They said the three had pleaded guilty and agreed to prison terms of about 2 1/2 years each.

Now it is up to the court to decide whether to accept their plea bargains and sentence them immediately without trial, a step considered very likely. The court said it still hadn't reviewed the documents and could not comment Thursday.

Prosecutor Janusz Hnatko said the Swede, Anders Hogstrom, would serve out his term in a Swedish prison if the court convicted him.

The sign bearing the notorious Nazi slogan "Arbeit Macht Frei" — or "Work Makes You Free" — was stolen last December. Holocaust survivors and others were outraged, viewing it as a desecration of the memory of the more than 1 million people killed at the Nazi death camp in occupied Poland during World War II.

A massive police hunt resulted in the discovery three days after the theft of the sign in a snowy wood. It had been cut into three pieces to make it easier to transport.

Police detained five Polish men and Hogstrom, initially describing him as the mastermind.

Thursday's announcement indicates that Polish authorities now believe that Hogstrom was not the ultimate instigator of the theft, but more of a middleman with personal ties to the mastermind.

Hnatko said the Polish suspects were motivated by financial gain, each earning 5,000 to 10,000 zlotys (\$1,680 to \$3,370) for their roles.

However, Hogstrom acted under "other obligations resulting from a personal relationship between those two men," Parys said. He refused to elaborate.

Polish officials refused to divulge the identity of the suspected mastermind.

Under the plea bargain, Hogstrom has agreed to a sentence of two years and eight months and a Pole identified only as Marcin A. to two years and six months, both on incitement to theft. Another Pole,

**Russia publishes Katyn massacre archives**

A letter from Soviet Secret Police Chief Beria was among the files published. Russia has published online once-secret files on the 1940 Katyn massacre, in which some 22,000 members of the Polish elite were killed by Soviet forces.

The state archive said the "Packet No. 1" original files had until now only been available to researchers.

The Soviet Union denied its role in the massacre for decades. But relations between Russia and Poland have warmed since the Polish president and others were killed in a plane crash on their way to a Katyn commemoration.

The six documents that were published on the state archive website were declassified in 1992 on the order of the then-Russian president, Boris Yeltsin. Current President Dmitry Medvedev had now ordered their publication online, the state archive said.

**'Symbolic gesture'**

One of the documents is a 5 March, 1940 letter from the then-head of the Soviet secret police or NKVD, Lavrenty Beria, to Soviet leader Joseph Stalin, recommending the execution of Polish prisoners of war.

Beria refers to them as "steadfast, incorrigible enemies of Soviet power". "Each of them is just waiting for liberation so as to actively join the struggle against Soviet power," it says. The letter bears Stalin's signature in blue pencil, with the comment "In favour".

Given that historians have already had access to the files for some time, correspondents say the decision to put them on the state archive website is likely to be seen as a symbolic gesture, rather than shedding new light on what happened at Katyn.

"We on the Russian side are showing absolute openness in telling what happened in Katyn and other places with Polish prisoners of war," Russian state archive chief Andrei Artyzov was quoted as saying by Russian news agencies.

"All the basic documents about these events have been published." Among the

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Andrzej S., would get two years and four months for theft and for damaging the sign.

Three other Poles with lesser roles confessed earlier this year and are already serving sentences ranging in length from six months to two-and-a-half years. □

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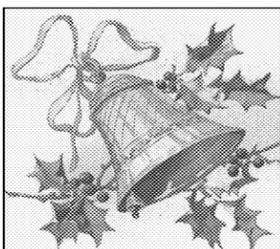
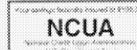
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