

Dear Chairman Grassley, Ranking Member Durbin and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

Today, I write to you with heartfelt gratitude. Chairman Grassley, I am particularly grateful to you for your years of leadership and advocacy in bringing transparency to the role of Swiss banks and the Nazis. Although some 80 years have passed, this hearing is a testament to your relentless focus on morality and accountability; principles that you have placed firmly at the heart of this endeavor.

For more than 20 years I've traveled from Lithuania to the border of Azerbaijan, investigating the sites where Nazis murdered Jewish families during the Holocaust by Bullets. What I've learned is haunting. Many decades after the murders, neighbors can tell you who was killed and where in tragic detail, but almost no one can explain what came of their belongings. Somehow, financial crimes are taboo in Holocaust studies.

At Babyn Yar alone, 33,771 Jews were executed, and to this day we don't know much about the fate of their money and property. But we know even less about what happened to the property and assets of German companies, businesspeople, and SS officers.

Many companies cooperated with the SS and profited from forced labor in camps. The Nazis even allowed industrialists to keep their fortunes and continue their businesses as usual in exchange for their cooperation.

But what about the others? That money had to be kept somewhere, and its origins could not have been a mystery to the institutions that held it on the Nazis' behalf—the Swiss banks like Credit Suisse and UBS.

Many Nazis, wealthy citizens, and industrialists managed to transfer their assets abroad before the end of the war in an effort to save their fortunes. They did this by purchasing securities like dollars or Swiss francs, gold, art, real estate, and other tangible assets which were then moved abroad, often via neutral countries such as Switzerland. Millions of Reichsmarks disappeared from Nazi Germany, and many Nazis followed their money abroad to establish their new livelihood and evade Allied justice.

Most people assume the Nuremberg Trials brought justice for every criminal Nazi. What is largely unknown in public opinion is that from 1945 onward, thousands of Nazis escaped Europe via secret escape networks known as Ratlines, including Josef Mengele, the infamous "Angel of Death;" Franz Stangl, commandant of Sobibor and Treblinka; Adolf Eichmann, logistics master of the Final Solution; and countless lesser-known killers. For 80 years, these networks were known but barely acknowledged, obscured by the Nazis' countries of refuge and compliant financial institutions, almost invisible in public debate.

It is easier today to trace Mengele's path to Argentina than to know how he and other Nazis transferred their fortunes to banks that were all too happy to turn a blind eye.

Thankfully, that silence is now breaking. As you, Mr. Chairman continue your investigation coupled with Independent Ombudsman Barofsky's investigation into Credit Suisse, Argentine President Javier Milei has declassified almost 2000 documents detailing the mass arrival of Nazis in Argentina, their settlement, and, crucially, the financial transfers that ensured their escape and long-term protection. These documents reveal what many already suspected: banks not only knew they were holding Nazi assets; they also actively concealed that fact from authorities long after the Third Reich was defeated.

We cannot afford to ignore this history. Unexamined, it sets a precedent for the financial flows that fuel today's most dangerous terrorist networks and their support after their acts. If banks pay no penalty for holding Nazi wealth, if there is no accountability, they will continue to do so for the perpetrators of other mass crimes.

This isn't about blaming banks blindly—it's about transparency. Eight decades after the Holocaust, the world deserves to know how Nazi killers and profiteers financed their survival and prosperity under authoritarian regimes. Mr. Chairman, it's time to finally close the chapter on the Ratlines. By bringing decades of secrecy, covert diplomacy, and willful silence into the light and demanding accountability for the Swiss banks that for far too long slithered in darkness, the world will be a better place.

In closing, Senators, thank you for your tireless advocacy to uncover the truth about how Nazi businesses and individuals hid their fortune and assets. Thank you for recognizing that the banks cared more about profit than morality when they decided to keep Nazi money in their accounts. And most importantly, thank you for your efforts to bring transparency and accountability to the Swiss banks.

I look forward to seeing how your investigations will further uncover the flow of these funds and the conduct of the banks involved.

Father Patrick Desbois

*Founder & President, Yahad-In Unum*