

Records of 3 War-Crimes Suspects Raided

By PAUL MIESKIL
(Second of a series)

Important documents on at least three suspected Nazi war criminals have been removed from Immigration and Naturalization Service files, a News investigation has disclosed.

Immigration agents who put the documents in the files believe they were taken out and destroyed by higher-ups in the agency.

In two of the three cases, the missing documents contained evidence linking suspects to the wartime activities of the Nazi SS, Hitler's so-called elite guard. A document lifted from a third

The Nazis Next Door

file noted that a top immigration agency official had ordered an investigator to close the case of a war crime suspect.

The three cases of file tampering which have come to light so far

(sources close to the agency believe there may be others) involved:

• **Hermine Braunsteiner Ryan**, Queens housewife and former SS guard in Nazi concentration camps, who was deported to West Germany last year after a long legal battle. Statements of seven witnesses against her vanished mysteriously from a locked filing cabinet at the New York headquarters of the immigration agency as her case was being prepared for trial.

• **Boleslaus Blukovskis of Mineola, L.I.**, a former Latvian police official

who was sentenced to death in absentia in 1955 by a Soviet war crimes tribunal. During 6½ years of agency inaction on this case, file was stripped of a memo stating that the original investigation of Blukovskis was abruptly canceled without explanation by the agency's assistant commissioner for investigations.

• **Tscherin Soobzokov**, a New Jersey public official whose name appears on an immigration agency list of 87

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alleged war criminals. Soobzokov was added to the list after Rep. Elizabeth Holtzman (D-Brooklyn) inquired about his case. At the agency's office in Newark, which now has his file, did not know it was supposed to investigate him until the agency list was made public last month.

Soobzokov is chief inspector for the Purchasing Department of Passaic County, a former member of the Paterson Zoning Board and a close friend of New Jersey judges, congressmen and other officeholders. A naturalized citizen, he is active in politics and in the affairs of Circassian immigrants from the caucasus area of the Soviet Union. He lives in a modest house on a pleasant but by no means affluent block of 14th Ave., Paterson.

Soobzokov, who vehemently denies that he was involved in any war crimes, was reported to the immigration agency about five years ago by an investigator for another federal agency.

"I investigated him for another matter," the federal prober told The News. "In the course of my inquiry, I spoke to people who knew him and received allegations that he might have been involved in war crimes. The people I spoke to had seen him in different areas — Russia, Romania, Hungary, Austria and in uniforms they described as SS or secret police."

Checked With Berlin

The agent checked with the Berlin Document Center in Germany, which has membership lists of various Nazi organizations such as the SS, SD (Security Service) and Gestapo. The center found Soobzokov's name on a roster prepared by the personal office of the Waffen-SS on March 13, 1946.

According to this roster, Tscherin Soobzokov was born Jan. 1, 1918, and was transferred to the Waffen-SS on Jan. 4, 1945, with the rank of first lieutenant. In an accompanying letter, the document center director noted: "Judging by the internal evidence of those records which are available here, the following description can be made:

"Subject was a former officer of the Red Army who was either captured by the German forces or deserted to the Germans. It can be assumed that the subject held the equivalent rank of a first lieutenant in the Red Army."

"Based on similar cases, it can be assumed that subject, prior to his official takeover by a regular Waffen-SS unit, was not so-

signed to regular units of the

Waffen-SS but rather performed services with . . . irregular forces of the SS.

The federal agent sent copies of these documents to immigration agency investigator Anthony DeVito, who later retired because he felt there was a deliberate effort by the agency's central office in Washington to cover up cases involving war crime suspects.

"I put the documents in the Soobzokov file, DeVito said yesterday. "So far as I know, they were still there when I retired a year ago."

The agent currently assigned to the Soobzokov case was unaware of the SS documents until a reporter inquired about them. The agent said they were not in the file.

After the war, Soobzokov moved to the Middle East, became a citizen of Jordan and adopted the Arabic name of Abdul-Karim Snowabzoka. He came to the U.S. in 1955.

On his application for an immigrant visa, he listed his date of birth as Jan. 1, 1918, the same as the birth date on the SS roster. He also stated that he had lived in the Caucasus area of the Soviet Union until 1943, when he joined the German Army—1944 to 1946, moved with the retreating German Army until he finally reached Villach, Austria, in 1945.

The application also mentions that "military record of service in the Soviet Army (conspicuous from 1939-1942) unobtainable."

Different Story Now

Soobzokov now contends he was born in 1921 and served in neither the Soviet nor German armies. Asked about the sworn statements on his visa application, he said: "Most of that is not correct information."

Insisted that he had made the statements under oath, he said: "Right. It was an application made at that time. It was a different situation then."

"They (the statements) were right to a certain degree but there were corrections made in due course, at that time and in recent years."

Asked specifically about his alleged membership in the Waffen-SS, he said: "It isn't so. When I say not so, we have to have some explanation than this—how could it happen, what happened, where that happened."

"I would not say anything until I know what they (immigration agency investigators) have. If they talked to people who would know the truth, they would not list these allegations at all."

Soobzokov asked that he has been trying to find out why his name was put on the agency's list, what allegations have been made against him and who made them. He said he is still waiting for an explanation.

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Soobzokov Mum on Nazi Complicity

Tscherm Soobzokov of 704 14th Ave. went about his duties as chief investigator for the Passaic County Purchasing Department Monday, apparently undisturbed over the report in a New York newspaper that he's one of two area men under investigation by the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service for alleged World War II Nazi war crimes.

The other name released is Emanuel Jasluk of Passaic.

The Passaic city directory and telephone directory lists an Emanuel Jasluk at 233 Passaic Ave., but there was no answer to the phone or at the door of the modest 2 1/2-

story house at that address.

Soobzokov is a well known figure in Passaic County ethnic and political circles. A Democrat, he was named to his county post by then Passaic County Democratic Chairman Anthony J. Grossi and served two terms on the Paterson Board of Adjustment during the prior administration of Republican Mayor Lawrence F. Kramer, who appointed him to that board.

Both Grossi and Kramer expressed surprise over the allegations of Soobzokov's Nazi involvement. Both said they knew him as a leader of the city's Circassian or "White Russian" community.

Kramer said he could not recall who had recommended Soobzokov for appointment, but that he had been active with ethnic organizations during his campaign.

Grossi said he was "not about to pass any kind of judgment" on the man. He said Soobzokov had appeared to be the leader of the "White Russian" community in Paterson, had been active in its affairs and in that capacity moved naturally into the political arena, since all politicians are anxious to woo the ethnic vote. He said that in casual conversations he had had with Soobzokov over the years, he had appeared to be anti-fascist,

anti-Nazi and anti-Communist in his thinking.

Soobzokov, himself, was not talking. He refused to "make any comment," until he has met with immigration officials to learn "what if any charges" they might have against him. He said he has been seeking a meeting with INS since his name first appeared in a major New York newspaper last June 5, where he was included in a list of 37 alleged war criminals. The list was dug up at the insistence of Congresswoman Elizabeth Holtzman, Brooklyn Democrat, as a spin-off of the New York case of Mrs. Hermione

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Fraustine Hynn, a Queens housewife and former Nazi concentration camp guard who was exiled by the U. S. last year.

Documents Attesting

Reportedly, the statements of a number of witnesses who testified against Mrs. Hynn vanished from a locked filing cabinet at the New York INS office, together with documents on at least three other suspected Nazi war criminals under INS investigation.

Soobzokov's file reportedly was one of those tampered with, but the immigration official assigned to his case at the Newark office disclaimed any knowledge of a missing file. He said the file is in the Newark office and that the case is open. The immigration official said that so far he has had nothing, but rumors to work with and has been unable to track down any firm witnesses "other to confirm or deny" Soobzokov's Nazi activities.

He noted Soobzokov's involvement in public and political life and said that with people like this "we get rumors all the time." The agent said he was "working just about full time" on his and Jasluk's case, the latter since 1955. He has been in touch many times over the years, has taken many statements, but all of the information on either of the two men is "scarcely hearsay" and cannot be substantiated. The official asked that his name not be used, saying that he was speaking only as a member of the staff of Dominick "Maddi" district director of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service in Newark.

Soobzokov came to the U.S. in 1955 and became a naturalized U.S. citizen on April 17, 1961. Witnesses for him at the time were a Maria and Ramazan Lashin, of 46 Dayton St., Newark.

Birth Dates in Error

According to the immigration service file and his visa application, his birth date is listed as Jan. 1, 1918. When he applied for U.S. citizenship he gave his birth date as Aug. 24, 1924, his occupation as a machine operator and said he was father of five children. His address then was 58 North Third St. He listed his place of birth as Tschitzmukal, USSR. He entered this country June 28, 1955 on the liner Saturnia.

In 1952, a News feature story on his activities with the Paterson Circassian community gives his age as 35, which would tie in with the 1924 birth date.

Soobzokov's name reportedly was linked to the dread Nazi SS-Elite Corps on a roster of the Waffen SS now on file in the Berlin Document Center in Germany, which lists Nazi subversive organizations and individuals.

The roster reports his birthdate as 1918 and lists him as transferring to the Waffen SS, March 12, 1945, was the rank of first lieutenant. He was said to be a former officer of the Red (Russian) Army who had either been captured by the Germans or had deserted. The file said he was believed to have been "at no time" in the regular German army, and had performed services with "irregular" forces of the SS.

Biography Listed

Soobzokov's biography when he joined the Paterson Zoning Board lists him as having been shipped to Rumania as a "semi-forced laborer" when the German Army captured Russian territory in the Caucasus. He said he had worked as

a "transportation" worker in Rumania and was later transferred to Husgaty and Austria, where he was when the war ended.

The White Russian leader said that he refused to return to the Russian-occupied Caucasus, went to Jordan, which had a Circassian community, got a job with the English-run Iraqi Petroleum Company and in 1949 became a government personnel officer in Amman, Jordan. He said that in 1946 he had become a voluntary representative for the North Caucasus Society helping to resettle refugees in that country. With the division of Palestine, a million refugees had poured into Jordan, making the already difficult life more so, sparking their relocation to the U.S.

Soobzokov became the leader of the Circassian community in Paterson and subsequently became involved in litigation over the action of its president.

3 Guilty

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dedicated he too would appeal. The three teachers, suspended after their indictment, had been fired from their positions as group shelter workers two days after the alleged beating incident.

The three, all workers on the 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. shift at the Paramus facility, allegedly beat 11 male inmates aged from 13 to 17 years with gloves, pool cues and their hands, in an attempt to find a stolen key to a shelter van.

Testifying during their trial, the men denied that the beatings were severe and compared them with fraternity hazing pranks rather than severe corporal punishment.

However, Assistant Prosecutor Ronald Schwartz, in his closing arguments to the jury on Monday, said that the incident exceeded "non-punitive social work skills" normally employed in dealing with emotionally upset children.

The state alleged that the men blindfolded, snun around and beat the 11 boys calling the actions inexcusable, especially since it happened behind the closed doors of a public institution. Although the defendants testified that none of the children was hurt as a result of what they called a "harmless psychological exercise," several of the 10 boys who testified for the prosecution said they were frightened and hurt by the incident while others said it was "significant."

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Refugee: 'I Owe Soobzokov My Life'

By PAT PATTERSON
A woman who said, "I owe my life—hundreds of people owe their lives" to Tschirim Soobzokov, came forward Wednesday in a strong defense of the man the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service is investigating for alleged Nazi war crimes.

She is Mrs. Fatima Celik, the former Shakadina Valentin, of this city, who was one of a band of five women and 20 men that Soobzokov shepherded across Europe for two years, between advancing and retreating Russian and German lines, all the while heading for the safety of the U.S. forces. She told of scrounging for meager scraps of food, moving by night on the undercarriages of horse drawn vans, in truck beds and traveling by any available means of transportation that offered a hiding place.

"If the Russians had caught us or the Germans had caught us, we would have been killed," she said. "We had to get to the American lines."

Mrs. Celik said she was an 18-year-old girl when the advancing German Army moved into her village in the Russian Caucasus in 1942, and she was captured and transported to a labor camp some 90 miles from

Berlin. For two years she worked on pressing machines 13 hours a day, got no pay and for nourishment had to subsist on a single slice of bread a day, some tea without sugar and a thin soup, usually made from potato skins.

When the Allied Forces began bombing Berlin, the camp was relocated in Vienna, Austria. Here, the girls were given a few hours off on Sundays and permitted to walk in the city. She said she and a companion had darted into a restaurant to "collect food left on the plates," when they heard men speaking in Russian.

She said the men struck up a conversation, and offered to help get them out of the camp. They worked out a plan to meet them on their next free period in the city. On the night before, they

were to throw what few belongings they had over the camp wall to a waiting accomplice below.

The next day they met Soobzokov and his companions in the city and were hustled to the railroad station where a group of five others were waiting. Together, they boarded a train that took them to Hungary. Soobzokov had supplied them with documents, and arranged for them to be sheltered with villagers from October, 1944, through March, 1945. The refugee group, by this time, had grown to 15 men and five women.

When the Russians began moving into Hungary, she said they got on the move again, keeping just ahead of the Russians and just behind the retreating Germans, pushing toward the U.S. or British lines. She said they

walked through the underbrush at night, or hid themselves in any kind of vehicle that would carry them. They got back into Austria where they finally linked up with U.S. and British forces, "and they treated us wonderful."

After the war they were sheltered in a refugee camp in Italy, where Soobzokov continued to act as leader. She said he worked out an arrangement to have the refugees enter Jordan, but she had married one of the group in 1948, a Turk, and that she chose to go with him to that country.

Mrs. Celik recalled Soobzokov as "a skinny young man, little more than a boy," who risked his life for his refugee band time and again. She said that while they were in Hungary, he was picked up once by the Germans and thrown into jail. The men in

the group "worked out a way to get him out, they didn't say how," and when they got in, they found him sick with typhus. They rolled him in a blanket and got him out and back to where they were staying.

"He had a raging fever. We thought he would die. But we took care of him."

She said that through all of the years from October '44 through the war's end, "I never saw him in a uniform. He was a civilian, working for us."

She said had she not met him in that chance meeting she would surely have died, because in March 1945, the labor camp at Vila in Austria from which she had escaped, had been totally destroyed by bombs.

She was living in Turkey, (with her present second husband) in the late '50s when

she heard from a friend that Soobzokov had gone to the United States. She managed to get his address and contacted him, to ask how her family could come to this country.

"He helped me again," she said, "as he has so many others."

"We stayed with the Soobzokovs for two weeks, in their home. He got us a place to live on North Fifth Street, got jobs for me and my husband and Mrs. Soobzokov bought us food and helped us get furnishings—and never asked for one penny."

"He even paid for our tickets to come here," said Celik. "We paid him back, something each week but just the right amount—nothing more."

The Celiks said that Soobzokov has done the same for hundreds of others. . . . "almost all of the Circassians who were in Jordan. And now many of those who took his help have turned on him."

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