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**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA AND ALL FORMS OF
DISCRIMINATION**

Joint written statement* submitted by The Europe – Third World Centre (CETIM), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status, and the American Association of Jurists (AAJ), and International League For The Rights And Liberation of Peoples (LIDLIP), non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2005]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

THE ROLE OF BIG BUSINESS IN THE HOLOCAUST

1. The world recently commemorated the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in January 1945, followed by the liberation of several other Nazi concentration camps.¹ Auschwitz was the biggest concentration and death camp organized by the Nazi machinery, where millions of people were sent² and submitted to hard labour, hunger, executions, crematorium ovens and gas chambers; it was the industrialization of death. Those camps have remained in our collective memory as the expression of the biggest bestiality man can reach. But in these commemorations, which are crucial to preserve the memory of that unspeakable horror, there is an aspect of concentration camps that has almost been forgotten: they were not only death camps but also suppliers of slave labour for big corporations.

2. Knowing about this aspect of the Holocaust is essential to the understanding of factors and mechanisms which led to “the final solution”, where an irrational, fanatic, racist and aggressive ideology met with the specific interests of the dominant sectors of big business.³ This understanding is absolutely necessary to put people on full alert in view of a possible repetition of such events. After the First World War, the Bolshevik Revolution created a feeling of panic among the capitalist circles throughout the world, whereas it came to be well liked by many intellectuals and offered the poor a ray of hope for a better world based on brotherhood and solidarity. This was also reflected in Germany where, in January 1919, members of the Spartacus group tried to follow the Bolshevik example, but they failed and were bloodily repressed. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, their most renowned leaders, were murdered.

3. However, the German workers and left-wing groups went on preparing themselves for new attempts such as the revolt of 1923 which also failed. The German big business did not want to take such risks and, moreover, it had to face the huge economic crisis with drastic financial and political measures. Since 1925-26, major German businessmen decided to finance the anti-worker and anti-communist assault forces of the National Socialist Party, the SA and the SS. But Henry Ford stole a march on major German industrialists and bankers, since he already financed Hitler’s movement in 1922, as it appeared in the *The New York Times* edition of the 20th

¹ Dachau was the first camp opened by the Nazi regime, in March 1933. Several others were created later: Oranienburg, Buchenwald, Sachsenhausen, Chelmno, Belzec, Maidanek, Sobibor, Treblinka, etc.

² Despite the fact that the overwhelming majority of victims in Auschwitz were Jews, there were also other victims such as international members of the resistance, Soviet prisoners, Gypsies, blacks, homosexuals, etc.; that is why we prefer to talk about people, because, although the reasons to exterminate each racial, religious or political group were different, the overriding aim within concentration camps was to destroy the dignity inherent in human condition.

³ Anti-Semitism was not invented by Hitler; it is an age-old story that arises from religious and economic reasons to which Hitler added the racial ingredient and it was - and still is - firmly set into many people’s minds. For the purposes of Hitlerism and the German big business in the thirties, it was a message that found receptivity among the masses stricken by the economic crisis, and it also contributed to the “aryanization” of economy, i.e. to the expropriation of Jewish goods and companies according to the strong concentration of capital organized under Nazism. “In the business world...the “Aryans” were on watch to exploit their Jewish counterparts...Hundreds of Jewish companies, including long-established banks, such as the Warburg and the Bleichröder, were forced to transfer their assets to “Aryan” buyers for very low sums. Those who benefited from it were the major groups... such as Mannesmann, Krupp, Thyssen, Flick and IG Farben and major banks such as Deutsche Bank and the Dresdner Bank” (Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, 1936-1945*, Paris, Flammarion, 2000, p. 223).

December that year.⁴ Fritz Thyssen was the instigator of financial aid to Nazism by expatriating his profits to the United States and sending part of them back to Germany as economic contributions to Hitler's movement. In 1926, Thyssen and the American businessman Averell Harriman founded the Union Banking Corporation (UBC). On its board of directors there was Roland Harriman representing W.A. Harriman & Co, and E.S. James, representing Brown Brothers. And on the boards of these two firms there was Prescott Bush, the grandfather of George W. Bush. In October 1942, American authorities confiscated UBC's bank funds. The firm was denounced "as a commercial and financial company collaborating with the enemy" and all its assets were seized. Two other major businesses, linked to the Harriman banking corporation, were also confiscated by the US government: the Holland-America Trading Corporation and the Seamless Steel Equipment Corporation.

4. Later, on 11 November 1942, the US government put an embargo on another firm of the same group, the Silesian-American Corporation, under the same Act on trading with the enemy. This embargo was raised in 1951.⁵ The German lower middle class, impoverished by the crisis and high unemployment rates, was a breeding ground for Hitler's revanchist and racist harangues and for his populist demagoguery which is reflected in his party's name, working-class and socialist. In the July 1932 election, the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP) obtained 230 seats, against 133 for the socialists, 89 for the communists and 156 for other parties. Hitler claims the leadership of government, but President Hindenburg refuses and the Nazis start an outbreak of violence in the streets as well as inside the Parliament. In November 1932 there is a new election. The communists rise up to 100 seats, whereas the socialists lose 12 and the Nazis, 34. Hitler then declares that Germany is on the verge of a Bolshevik revolution and a group of prominent businessmen ask President Hindenburg to appoint him head of government, and he agrees to it. But Hitler refuses the appointment because he wants full power. Businessmen insist on supporting Hitler who takes over the leadership of government on 30 January 1933. From then on, repression against dissidents increases. There is a new election in March with catastrophic results: communists and socialists obtain 201 seats altogether and the Nazi Party, 288, i.e. an overwhelming majority. On 23 March 1933, the Reichstag grants full power to Hitler. The first concentration camp in Dachau was created on that month: communists, anarchists, socialists and other dissidents were sent there.

5. In May 1933, trade unions are dissolved and, in July, an act declaring all political parties illegal, excepting the NSDAP, thus creating a single-party system, is passed. In January 1934, a law regulating national labour, which benefits companies, is enacted. The managers of large corporations are appointed "führers". On 30 June

⁴ Antony C. Sutton, *Wall Street And The Rise Of Hitler*, ch. VI, 2000 www.reformed-theology.org/html/books/wall_street. Hitler, who hung a picture of Henry Ford in his office, decorated him with the Great Cross of the German Eagle. They shared, among other things, a frenzied anti-Semitism. Hitler admired the production line system implemented by Ford in his factories. On his autobiography *My life and work*, Ford stated, as Charles Patterson remembers (*Eternal Treblinka: Our Treatment of Animals and the Holocaust*, New York, Lantern Books, 2002), that he had been inspired for the production line by the operating system of slaughterhouses in Chicago. And so is the circle symbolically closed. As it is said by a character in the 1999 novel *Life of Animals* by J.M.Coetzee: "Chicago showed us the way, it was from the Chicago stockyards that the Nazis learned how to process bodies."

⁵ Webster G. Tarpley and Anton Chaitkin, *George Bush: The Unauthorized Biography*, 1992.

30, several members of the SA, opposed to Hitler within the NSDAP, are murdered; it is the so-called “Night of the Long Knives”. In September 1935, the racial laws are passed in Nuremberg. According to an International Red Cross report of that time, more than 4 200 people were killed in Germany between 1933 and 1935, 317 800 were injured and 218 600 were tortured. In March 1938, Hitler proclaimed the “Anschluss” and occupied Austria. In August 1938, Jews were banned from working as doctors and, in September, they were banned from working as lawyers. During the “Night of Broken Glass” (9 to 10 November 1938), 191 synagogues burned down, 91 Jews were murdered and 30 000 arrested, and 7 300 shops were looted. On 29 September 1938, when no-one could be unaware of the dictatorial, racist, anti-Semitic, militaristic and expansionist nature of the Nazi regime, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier meet in Munich. Neither the Prague cabinet nor the Soviet Union, which offered to carry out its agreement of mutual aid with Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack, were invited to the meeting. Hitler obtains almost all what he demands: the Czech Government has to evacuate immediately the regions with a majority of German population. Germany annexes more than 16 000 square kilometres, where 3 500 000 people lived, with more than 700 000 Czechs among them. In March 1939, Germany completed the occupation of Czechoslovakia.⁶

6. In Munich, Western powers continued implementing their basic strategy: giving Hitler free reins so that he could finally attack the Soviet Union. But Hitler had other plans, which led to the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. On April 30, 1942, Oswald Pohl, head of the economic and administrative office of the SS, sent Himmler a report on “the present situation of concentration camps”:

“The war has brought about a marked change in the structure of the concentration camps, and has changed their function with regard to the employment of the prisoners. The custody of prisoners for reasons of security, education or prevention is no longer the main consideration. It has gravitated towards economy.”

The regulation that was issued consequently stated that prisoners had to work till exhaustion in order to achieve the maximum output, that the working hours were unlimited and that it only depended on the structure and nature of the work.

7. Large corporations such as Krupp and Siemens benefitted from this free and slave work force, but particularly the IG Farbenindustrie in Auschwitz, which installed in Buna, the third camp in Auschwitz, a synthetic rubber factory. Around 35 000 prisoners worked there and 25 000 of them died (Raul Hilberg, *La destruction des Juifs d'Europe*, Paris, Fayard, 1988). Other major German firms also participated and benefitted from the Holocaust, such as the Bayerische Motoren-Werke (BMW), Volkswagen and Daimler Benz. In this recent book *IBM and the Holocaust* (Paris, Laffont, February 2001) Edwin Black reports how the well-known computer giant worked for the Nazi regime: the IBM punch-cards allowed the comprehensive census-taking that identified Jews who would be persecuted and murdered. During the war, Ford and General Motors also used slave labour when manufacturing military vehicles in Köln for the German army.

⁶ Munich was not the first big concession to fascism by Western powers: after Franco's coup in 1936 against the Spanish Republic, they proclaimed the “non-intervention”, whereas Nazi Germany and fascist Italy were sending Franco troops, guns and squadrons which indiscriminately bombed civilians in Republican zones.

8. Some of the firms which participated in and benefited from the Holocaust are now taking part in major international meetings, influencing organizations of the United Nations system, financing foundations and NGOs, but they are reluctant, such as Volkswagen and Ford ⁷, to pay the reparations claimed by the survivors of hard labour. But they did never abandon their old methods and they are still repeatedly violating human rights, instigating civil wars, promoting coups (in collaboration with the CIA), supporting dictatorships, violating the right to health, labour and environmental rights, etc. And they are emulated by more recent or old transnational corporations which have changed their name but not their habits. Following the instructions of maximum output, reduction of salaries, increase of the working hours and flexibility, the labour regulations of Auschwitz are still the principles of those businesses. And slavery still exists with the trafficking in men, women and children, with the purpose of labour or sexual exploitation,⁸ as well as racism, xenophobia and the different forms of discrimination and intolerance, which are many times promoted by governments.

9. Bush's messianic speeches on the global liberation mission of the United States do not differ much from those of Hitler about the Great Germany, which was intended to wipe Bolshevism out of the face of the Earth and to found a millenary empire.

And the Nazi "blitzkriegs" are also similar to the invasion of Panama, the Gulf War, the wars in Afghanistan and Yugoslavia and the invasion of Iraq. Five wars in fourteen years and a sixth one, against Iran, which has been already announced.

10. On this sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi camps, it is important to remember the closing sentence of *The Resistable Rise of Arturo Ui* by Bertold Brecht:

"THEREFORE LEARN HOW TO SEE AND NOT TO GAPE, TO ACT INSTEAD OF TALKING ALL DAY LONG. THE WORLD WAS ALMOST WON BY SUCH AN APE! THE NATIONS PUT HIM WHERE HIS KIND BELONGED; BUT DON'T REJOICE TOO SOON AT YOUR ESCAPE... THE WORLD HE CRAWLED FROM STILL IS GOING STRONG!"

⁷ In 1999, the German government set up a fund for the reparation of the hard labour workers during the Nazi regime. That fund is supplied by the German State and the following corporations, among others: Allianz, BASF, Bayer, BMW, Daimler-Chrysler, Deutsche Bank, Friedrich-Krupp, Krupp-Hoesch, Hoechst, Siemens, Volkswagen and the Dresdner Bank. These firms relied on the « biological solution », that is to say, the death of survivors, but the growing publicity about their profitable implication with Nazism forced them to search for the solution of setting up a fund in order to keep their reputation safe. But in Eastern Europe, in particular, hundreds of thousands of slave ex-workers during Nazism are still alive. In the Baltic region, Poland, Russia, the Czech Republic, Hungary and Ukraine there are at least one million people who had only received alms until now (approximately 500 marks per person, according to the reparations act of 1993) or nothing at all. However, these victims were excluded from negotiations.

⁸ According to sources, this traffic involves yearly between four and twenty million people and benefits between 5000 and 7000 million dollars.