

Bank is tackled on role in Holocaust: [London edition]

Parkes, Christopher. **Financial Times** [London (UK)] 06 Feb 1999: 04.



Deutsche Bank was more deeply involved in the construction of the Auschwitz concentration camp than it admitted this week, according to the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles.

Herman Abs, wartime chairman of the German bank, attended at least two meetings of the supervisory board of Auschwitz contractor IG Farbenindustrie, at which the use of forced labour was discussed, Rabbi Marvin Hier of the centre claimed yesterday.

As reports emerged that the World Jewish Congress, which is seeking compensation for Holocaust survivors from Deutsche Bank, had opened a probe of Dresdner Bank's wartime activities, Mr Hier said Deutsche Bank "must accept its responsibilities".

The bank, confronted by calls for its \$9.8bn (£6bn) merger with Bankers Trust to be delayed until its role has been clarified, published documents on Thursday showing it financed part of the death camp's construction. However, it said, Holocaust survivors would not be able to make any "concrete demands" based on the papers.

Mr Hier said he complimented the bank on its announcement, "but it does not nearly cover their involvement" or acknowledge that Mr Abs knew what "IG Farben was going to do with the money".

The Los Angeles centre, one of the largest of the groups inspired by Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal, yesterday released extracts from records of the Nuremberg war crimes trials relating to IG Farben, which also manufactured the poison gas used to kill camp inmates.

Mr Abs, chairman of the company's supervisory board, was not listed among the absentees shown in the minutes of board sessions in 1941 and 1942 which discussed "all efforts" to make up for labour shortages, and "using women, foreigners and prisoners of war".

A further extract, from "Farben-Auschwitz weekly report No. 8", dated shortly after the first of the supervisory board meetings, said "it will only be possible to procure the necessary. . . workers by means of compulsory service. It was still not possible to assign additional inmates as the necessary guards are still lacking."

Bank officials and lawyers are due in Washington next week to try to negotiate a process for resolving the issue and claims. Copyright Financial Times Limited 1999. All Rights Reserved.