



Ottawa to re-examine former Nazi's past after evidence emerges linking him to 1943 massacre

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Justice Minister Rob Nicholson and Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney told a group of Holocaust survivors on Wednesday the government would re-examine the case of a Nazi collaborator living near Montreal, according to a participant in the meetings.

The Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre brought the four Holocaust survivors to Ottawa to urge the ministers to take action against Vladimir Katriuk after new evidence surfaced implicating the 90-year-old Quebecer in a wartime massacre of villagers in Eastern Europe.

The survivors, including former prisoners of the Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps, asked the ministers to bring Nazi war criminals to justice within their lifetimes. They gave the ministers copies of a just-published academic paper that described Mr. Katriuk's alleged role in the 1943 Khatyn massacre.

"Clearly the research that we presented is new information and I think that they have to analyze it but they have committed to us that they will do so," said Avi Benlolo, president and CEO of the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre. "They will look at it and they will get the wheels in motion to bring it back to the forefront before it's too late."

Ana Curic, Mr. Kenney's spokeswoman, confirmed the discussion had taken place. She would not comment on any specific cases but said the government was committed to identifying and removing war criminals from Canada, "including revisiting new evidence on previously examined cases."

The Holocaust survivors also asked for government action against Helmet Oberlander, another Canadian long accused of Nazi war crimes. Mr. Benlolo said Mr. Kenney had committed to revisiting both the Oberlander and Katriuk cases.

Mr. Katriuk is a former member of a battalion commanded by German officers in what is now Belarus. He fled to Canada in 1951 using a false name. In 1999, the Federal Court of Canada ruled he had obtained his Canadian citizenship by misrepresentation but found there was no evidence he had committed atrocities. The federal Cabinet decided in 2007 not to revoke his citizenship.

But a paper published in the Spring 2012 edition of the academic journal *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* says recently declassified documents implicate Mr. Katriuk in an operation in Khatyn, whose residents were wiped out over their suspected support for partisans responsible for attacks on German forces.

The paper describes how, on March 22, 1943, villagers of the German-occupied village were herded into a barn which was then set on fire. Mr. Katriuk “reportedly lay behind the stationary machine gun, firing rounds at anyone attempting to escape the flames,” it says.

The paper also quotes testimony by one of the participants in the attack, who said Mr. Katriuk and another man “were shooting people lying on the road.” Another witness said Mr. Katriuk was armed with “a Czech-manufactured machine gun.” Mr. Katriuk “reportedly gathered a watch, a bracelet, and a small pistol” from a young woman’s body, the paper says.

Written by historian Per Anders Rudling, a postdoctoral fellow at Lund University in Sweden, the paper is based partly on Soviet files unsealed in 2008. The author said that while Soviet archival materials had to be treated with caution, other evidence also pointed to Mr. Katriuk’s involvement.

“Katriuk’s participation in the Khatyn massacre is confirmed by multiple testimonies, and in some detail,” Mr. Rudling, who did his PhD at the University of Alberta, told the *National Post*. “The testimonies are consistent in identifying Katriuk as a machine gunner at Khatyn, and indeed in other atrocities. Together, the material produces a compelling evidence that Katriuk was indeed an active participant in the massacre.”

Mr. Katriuk said he was unaware of Mr. Rudling’s paper. He has testified in court that he did not join the battalion voluntarily and that while he guarded villagers and livestock from partisans, he did not participate in German operations. After serving in the *Waffen-SS*, he defected and fought against the Germans.

Last week, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre named Mr. Katriuk as one of its “Most Wanted Nazi War Criminals” and gave a failing grade to the Canadian government’s efforts to investigate and prosecute Nazi war criminals. Mr. Benlolo said despite the passage of

time, bringing Nazis to account remained essential for Holocaust survivors. “For them it’s deeply, deeply important to seek justice.”