

For Immediate Release
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Generali Writ Denied, Holocaust-Era Lawsuit Can Proceed to Trial **Holocaust-Era Lawsuit Can Proceed to Trial**

Calling it another victory for this state's Holocaust survivors and heirs, Shernoff, Bidart, Darras & Dillon announced today that the Second District California Court of Appeals has denied Assicurazioni Generali's appeal that the state's courts lack jurisdiction to resolve decades-old Holocaust-era insurance claims (Stern v. Generali, No. BC 185376, Los Angeles Superior Court).

The ruling, made late yesterday, means that the Stern family can proceed to trial in their \$135 million damage suit claiming that Generali acted in bad faith when it refused to make good on policies purchased starting in 1929. The ruling also affects more than 6,000 California survivors who have unpaid claims against European-based insurance companies.

Plaintiffs' counsel William M. Shernoff said of the ruling, We are gratified that the appellate court will allow these claims to proceed since these people have been waiting more than 50 years for justice.

California Holocaust victims got a boost from the Legislature last year when it unanimously passed the Holocaust Victims Insurance Act. The new law, signed by former Gov. Pete Wilson last May, allows suits like the Sterns to go forward in state courts and extends the statute of limitations for the filing of such claims until Dec. 2010. Generali has maintained that the law is unconstitutional and such lawsuits should fall under the jurisdiction of the country where the insurance policies were purchased.

The Stern family suit filed last February was the first lawsuit filed in a U.S. court by an individual family alleging the wrongful withholding of life insurance benefits from policies issued to those who died in the Nazi concentration camps. The suit has the support of California Insurance Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush, who has filed friend of the court briefs on behalf of the plaintiffs.

A trial setting conference is set for April 20, 1999, before Judge Florence-Marie Cooper in Los Angeles Superior Court. A trial date will be set on that date.