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\$30m later, war crime trials now at 'just' end

ADELAIDE: Australia's \$30 million European war crimes prosecutions have ended after charges in the third and final case were withdrawn due to the ill health of the elderly accused.

Charges against South Australian pensioner Heinrich Wagner were dropped in Adelaide on Thursday and defence lawyer Michael David, QC, yesterday described it as a just

The Wagner trial was abandoned late on Thursday because the 69-year-old pensioner from Hindmarsh Island, 80km south of Adelaide, suffered a heart attack a fortnight ago and medical advice suggested could have died had the case contin-

The Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions, Michael Rozenes QC, entered a nolle prosequi (withdrawal of charges) on the grounds of Mr Wagner's ill health and a two-minute submission in the Supreme Court closed a controver

However, Australia's top European war crimes investigator is "bitter" about the case being dropped.

The head of the War Crimes Prosecution Support Unit, Graham Ble-witt, said that he had learnt of the decision to drop the case on Thursday while he was in Germany collecting evidence from new witnesses against Mr Wagner.

'After all the work that's gone into it it's a sad way for this to end," he said. "I'm also a bit bitter that Mr Rozenes didn't see fit to consult with me before he took that action, nor did he consult with his junior prosecutor, who is his deputy in charge of his Adelaide office.

"Neither of us had any idea that this was going to happen and as I say, I'm sure the critics will love this result but that doesn't worry me."

Mr David said Mr Wanner was Thursday night and he remained very ill despite his obvious relief.

Mr Wagner had pleaded not guilty to charges of being involved in the murder of 104 Jews and of being involved in the deaths of 19 children whose fathers were Jewish. The of-fences were allegedly committed in German-occupied Ukraine during World War II.

OX ANTIQUES

ANTIQUE

December 1986: Report by senior federal public servant Andrew Men-zies finds it "more likely than not" that criminals entered Australia after World War II.

April 1987: Director of Public Prose-cutions Special Investigations Unit set up to investigate alleged Europe-an war criminals.

December 1988: War Crimes Amendment Act passed.

January 26, 1990: Officers from the Director of Public Prosecutions Spe-cial Investigations Unit charge Polyu-khovich with the murder of 24 people and being connected with the murder of up to 850 Jews in Ukraine

April 1990: Polyukhovich's lawyers launch a High Court challenge to the war crimes legislation. June 27, 1990: Plans to hold over-sess hearings in the war crimes case abandoned after objections by Polyu-

July 29, 1990: Polyukhovich found

near his home in Adelaide with a bul-let wound to the chest, requiring a three-month hospital stay.

He was the last Australian to be

charged under the 1987 War Crimes

Amendment Act, as funding for the

special investigations unit estab-

in Australia expired on June 30 last

shed to pursue war criminals living

In June this year, 77-year-old Ade-

laide man Ivan Polyukhovich was acquitted of murder charges by a

Supreme Court jury after a long trial. Another Adelaide man, 78-year-

old Mikolay Berezowsky, had all

charges against him thrown out by an Adelaide magistrate last year be-

fore his case went to trial.

The three South Australian pen-

sioners were the only people to be charged under the Act. The cost to

taxpayers of bringing overseas wit-nesses to Australia plus legal fees for the defendants is believed to total

But the president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Isi Leibler, said yesterday the cost was justified even though none of the char-

"I'm surprised there's so much

about \$30 million.

ges were proved

CANBERRA'S BEST ANTIQUE SHOP

CHRONOLOGY OF CASES August 13, 1990: Crown prosecutor

The main dates concerning Austra-a's three European war crimes

Greg James, QC, tells the Adelaide Magistrates Court that police had concluded Polyukhovich had tried to kill himself. August 14, 1991: High Court rejects challenge to Australia's war crimes legislation, allowing Polyukhovich committal hearing to proceed.

September 5, 1991: Mikolay Berezowsky, 78, and Heinrich Wagner, 68, both charged in Adelaide under the

ar crimes legislation. October 28, 1991: Polyukhovich

ommittal hearing gets under way in delaide Magistrates Court. March 9, 1992: First of 27 oversess witnesses gives evidence at Polyu-khovich hearing.

charges against Polyukhovich due to unavailability of some overseas wit-nesses. He is now charged with the murder of 17 people and with being involved in the slaughter of up to 850 Jews in Semiki during World War II.

May 28, 1992: In closing submissions, defence counsel Michael David, QC, says evidence is contradictory and flawed. Greg James, QC, says there is ample evidence to send

emphasis on the issue of justice in putting it into financial terms," Mr

justice system and weigh up how much of taxpayers' money has been

spent in terms of an issue affecting

trivial sum in the total context of

what takes place in our justice sys-

these war crimes trials didn't take place 20 or 30 years ago, in many

cases I'm sure the due process would have identified convicted war crimi-

Mr David, who was senior de-fence lawyer for all three men

charged under Australia's war crimes legislation, said he was re-

lieved the trials had come to an end

"After hearing the evidence in all three cases it was obvious none of them should have been convicted,"

'In my opinion, despite a 50-year

gap, there was not in the first and

and said justice had prevailed

Mr David said.

ANTIQUES

"My profound regret remains that

justice, I think it's a very small an

'If one's going to look through the

June 5, 1992: Magistrate Kelvyn Prescott orders Polyukhovich to stand trial on two of the eight counts brought against him.

July 27, 1992; Polyukhovich formally pleads not guilty to the charges.
July 29, 1992: Adelaide magistrate dismisses murder charges against Berezowsky.

November 20, 1992: Heinrich Wagner ordered to stand trial on charges of murdering 19 children whose fa-thers were Jewish and of being involved in the murder of 104 Jews in German-occupied Ukraine.

January 11, 1993: Wagner formally leads not guilty to the charges. March 18, 1993: Polyukhovich tria

May 18, 1993: Jury of nine men and three women finds Polyukhovich not guilty of all charges after brief delib-eration.

October 26, 1993: High Court re-fuses special leave application to have permanent stay of proceedings

December 9, 1993: DPP drops case

second cases a conviction and there

should not have been a conviction in

Mr David declined to comment

on the validity of the war crimes prosecutions other than to say the

money spent could have been used

A spokesman for the Common-

wealth DPP said yesterday the de-partment would not comment on the war crimes cases and was not

able to specify how much mone

The spokesman released a one paragraph statement in relation to the withdrawal of charges.

"The DPP declined to proceed

further with the case and the Direc

or has taken into account the sub-

n court this week in reaching this

A spokesman for federal Attor-

ney-General, Michael Lavarch, said

vesterday all comments in regard to

the war crimes cases would come

stantial medical evidence tendered

decision," the spokesman said.

from the DPP.

LOTTERIES

IN BRIEF

MP clear in funds claim

Labor MP Andrew Theophanous

had been cleared of any wrongdoing over allegations that he demanded money from Chinese students, the

federal Minister for Justice, Dun-

Mr Kerr said he had been advised

by the Australian Federal Police

that no evidence had been found to

support the allegation made in a

newspaper article which Dr Theo-

phanous referred to the minister.

Werriwa dumped

SYDNEY: The Liberal Party has

innounced it will not contest the

federal seat of Werriwa in NSW in next year's by-election for the posi-

Mr Kerin, the former Treasurer

announced his resignation from po-

MELBOURNE: Self-made trucking tycoon Lindsay Fox and the ACTU secretary, Bill Kelty, said yesterday that more than 50,000 training jobs had been created through their Work For Australia

The two have spent 16 months

ouring the country urging big and

small businesses and councils to

give young people a chance to work.

Self-made

tion cleared by John Kerin.

litics earlier this month.

50,000 jobs

MELBOURNE:

can Kerr, said last night.

52 Jackpot Lottery No 5185: First 1100,000 No 139698, nfp Double Bay; second 510,000 No 122919, nfp St Andrews; third 55000 No 3250, nfp Singleton, Consolation 1000 cach, Nos 139697, 139699, Jackpot of \$2,020,000 not won by ticket No 53989

NSW Lotto, week 49/93, Thursday draw: Division 1 \$449,922.70, division 2 \$7141.70, livision 3 \$494, division 4 \$11.60, division 5 16.60.

Australian Lotto Bloc, midweck draw 1292: Division 1 \$5,000,000, division 2 \$11,348.05, division 3 \$1544.10, division 4 48.85, division 5 \$20.85.

VICE-REGAL

Yesterday afternoon, the Governor-General, Bill Hayden, presid-ed at a meeting of the Federal Executive Council at Government House, Can-

In the morning, Mr and Mrs Hayden called on the Mayor of the Gold Coast City Council, Alderman A. J. D. Bell, at the Gold Coast City Council building. Bundall.

Afterwards, Mr and Mrs Hayden re-turned to Canberra from the Gold Coast.

Mr J. Lewis and Ms M. Alabons have arrived at Government House.

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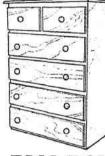
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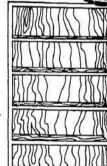


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D:45cm

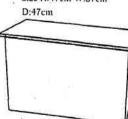


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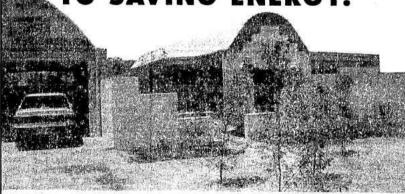
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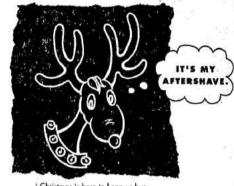
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