

Claims Settlement Act so as to empower the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission to consider claims arising under the claims agreement between the United States and Poland until March 31, 1968.

Thousands of Americans—Catholics, Protestants, and members of the Orthodox Christian faiths, as well as Jews—were deprived of property rights by the Polish Communist Government. Many of these claimants emigrated to the United States during the years of religious and racial persecution which preceded this country's entrance into the Second World War.

Unprecedented difficulties hampered many claimants against Poland in procuring evidence with which to establish their rights before the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission. For one thing, the physical destruction which accompanied the end of the Second World War obliterated many public records and destroyed banks, public registries, and other depositories of evidences of property ownership.

Secondly, the Russian Army looted most of the stock certificates which they found in Eastern Europe.

Thirdly, those who migrated in the 1930's in fear of their lives left Europe hurriedly and did not have the time nor the ability to bring documents with them to establish their property rights. The changes of political boundary lines, the dropping of the Iron Curtain and other factors made it difficult for many claimants to establish their rights. In addition, many claimants were not aware of the standards of proof required by the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission in Washington until insufficient time to procure necessary evidence remained prior to the completion of the Polish claims program on March 31, 1966.

The borders of Poland were de facto enlarged at the end of the Second World War to include a large area located east of the Oder and Neisse Rivers. Claims relating to expropriated property located in this newly added Polish territory have been particularly difficult to prove, for it was often necessary to secure official documents from both German and Polish sources.

In Report No. 682 which accompanied its submission of S. 1935, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations acknowledged that difficulties and delays had hindered many claimants in obtaining documentary evidence with which to establish their rights. Accordingly, the Senate proposed to extend the Polish claims program until March 31, 1968.

A recent liberalization of attitudes in Poland and in Germany now facilitates the obtaining of proof of ownership of property which was confiscated by the Polish Government after 1945.

Many individuals whose cases were timely presented to the Foreign Claims Settlement Commission were unable, despite their diligence, to obtain necessary evidence. These claimants have already been severely injured in both purse and person by actions taken in Europe. In the interests of justice these deprived claimants should be given a reasonable additional time within which to prove their claims.

The original proposal of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations in September of 1965 was to extend the period of proof for claims against Poland from March 31, 1966, to March 31, 1968; that is, 2 years. Diligent claimants have, of course, been seeking additional evidence continuously since the Senate proposal was first made. The grace period for proof of claims which is now appropriate would be an