P.S. to the NEWS
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OPERATION KEELHAUL

The right to stamp a document "Top Secret" is one of the most abused prerogatives of the Federal Government. The purpose of this power is to safeguard national security, but it is often used to hide the mistakes of public officials, to protect their reputations, and to keep the American people from learning what enemy countries have known for years.

These are the very reasons why the Government has been playing a cat-and-mouse game for 20 years with historian Julius Epstein over a certain set of World War II documents designated by the code name "Operation Keelhaul."

The word "keelhaul" refers to the cruelest torture used in 18th century navies. It meant throwing a man overboard and hauling him by ropes under the bottom of the ship. Few survived the punishment. "Operation Keelhaul" was the code name applied by the U.S. Army to the forced repatriation at the end of World War II of at least two million anti-Communist refugees from the Soviet Union.

These refugees had fled from Stalin's tyranny so eloquently described in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's new book, THE GULAG ARCHIPELAGO. These refugees hoped for asylum in the West, and, indeed, millions of American leaflets had been dropped from our planes promising that they would not be sent back to Russia.

But from 1944 to 1947, in violation of our promises, as well

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as international law and simple humanitarianism, the U.S. Army rounded them up and used guns, clubs, and bayonets to turn them over to the Soviets. Knowing that they faced certain death, torture, or slave labor camps, tens of thousands committed suicide. One group of refugees at Fort Dix, New Jersey, resisted repatriation so vigorously that they had to be drugged to get them onto a Soviet ship.

Despite the refusal of the Federal Government to declassify the incriminating documents, Julius Epstein has amassed conclusive eye-witness and documentary proof of this heinous crime and published it in his new book called OPERATION KEELHAUL: THE STORY OF FORCED REPATRIATION. The blood is on the hands of the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations which established the policy that the United States would do anything at all -- no matter how inhumane or unreasonable -- to appease dictator Stalin and acquiesce in his murderous demands.

Since the Federal Government has defied the Freedom of Information Act and refused to release the Operation Keelhaul documents, our only recourse is an investigation by Congress. It is quite a commentary on some people's scale of values that the Watergate Committee has spent many months and hundreds of thousands of dollars to try to declassify certain White House tapes and expose the truth about relatively minor crimes, but displays no interest whatsoever in forcing declassification of documents which hide the murderous crimes of Operation Keelhaul.

Maybe Julius Epstein's persistent dedication and scholarly detective work will bring out the truth at last.

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