

**The Decision Is Final:
REAGAN AND KOHL WILL BOTH
VISIT THE BITBURG CEMETERY**

By David Kantor

BONN, April 23 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Reagan will together visit the military cemetery at Bitburg next month where Reagan will place a wreath at the graves of some 2,000 German soldiers, among them members of the notorious Waffen SS.

The government's chief spokesman, Peter Boenisch, said today that there has been no change of plans, despite the fierce anger aroused in the U.S. over Reagan's intention to honor German war dead, including Nazis, and the bitter controversy over the matter that has developed here.

In response to suggestions in the U.S. that Kohl ease Reagan's predicament by proposing a visit to another site where no Nazis are known to be buried, Boenisch said the Chancellor and the President talked about the matter by telephone and decided that they will go to Bitburg.

Reagan's Visit To Bitburg Defended

Meanwhile, Alfred Dregger, chairman of the Bundestag faction of Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian coalition partner, the Christian Social Union (CSU), has come under heavy fire for sending letters to members of the U.S. Senate defending Reagan's visit to Bitburg.

Hermann Langbein, secretary of the Committee of Auschwitz Survivors, charged that Dregger's letter amounts to a defense of the Third Reich and its now deceased machinery of death. Langbein, who lives in Vienna, also criticized Dregger's remark that he was proud of having defended a German city against advancing Russian troops in the final days of World War II. His statement was published by the press service of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD).

Kohl and Dregger have been criticized by some West German news organizations for their handling of Reagan's itinerary. Liberal and leftwing newspapers accused them of insensitivity. But other newspapers have lashed out at American television networks for describing Bitburg as a "Nazi cemetery."

They claim there is a distinction between the SS, who ran the Nazi extermination camps, and the Waffen SS who, they said, were integrated into the army and fought like any other soldiers.

It was members of the Waffen SS who, during the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, massacred 115 disarmed and bound U.S. prisoners of war at Malmedy, not far from Bitburg.

Hans Albrecht, Prime Minister of the Federal State of Lower Saxony, meanwhile, has welcomed Reagan's announcement that he will visit the site of the former concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen, near Hannover. He said the State government is preparing strong security measures to protect the President and his party.

**AUSTRIAN OFFICIAL PROPOSES JAIL
TERM FOR ANYONE PERPETUATING CLAIM
THAT THE HOLOCAUST NEVER EXISTED**

By Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, April 23 (JTA) -- Interior Minister Karl Blecha proposed today punishment of up to one year in prison for anyone who perpetuates or disseminates the "Auschwitz lie," the claim that the Holocaust never occurred.

He said at a press conference here that the Austrian penal code must be amended accordingly and that the same punishment be applied to anyone who approves, praises, minimizes or denies the crimes committed under the Nazi regime in Austria.

He would also close loopholes in existing laws which prevent some Jews from bringing legal action against anti-Semitic offenders.

Blecha said he raised the issue at a Jewish community center Holocaust memorial gathering here last week and hopes it will mark the beginning of a nationwide fight against rising neo-Nazi propaganda in Austria. According to the minister, the fight must be waged on two levels -- by the police and through education. He thought that in the long run, the latter was the more effective.

Clever Evasion Of Anti-Propaganda Law

He said that for many months, teachers and school principals have complained to police that neo-Nazi propaganda was being distributed outside of schools in Vienna, Linz, Klagenfurt and other cities. Although political propaganda is prohibited on school premises, the distribution of leaflets outside the schools is allowed under the law. He said the propaganda is so cleverly worded that the letter of the law is not violated.

Because the police and the courts are unable to act in such cases, the penal code required amendment, Blecha said. He noted that the penal code prohibits incitement against churches, religions and foreigners. But those Austrian Jews who are not religious are excluded from this protection. It is one of the loopholes he wants closed.

Blecha stressed that as Interior Minister he can only make proposals. The initiation of legislation must be either by the Minister of Justice or a parliamentary faction. He said the Socialist faction, headed by Chancellor Fred Sinowatz, may soon come up with a draft bill.

But Justice Minister Harold Ofner, a member of the Freedom Party, a coalition partner, cannot be relied upon for support. According to the book, "The Extreme Right in Austria," Ofner is listed among those Austrians who have been supportive of neo-Nazis.

Actions Against Neo-Nazism In Austria

Blecha said neo-Nazi activists constitute a very small group in Austria, numbering no more than 180-200. But he could not estimate the number of sympathizers or the amount of financial and logistical support they receive from abroad. He said the West Germany authorities are cooperating closely with the Austrian authorities in that area.

Blecha listed some of the action his ministry has taken against neo-Nazism in Austria in recent years. He said that since May, 1983 when the present coalition government replaced former Chancellor Bruno Kreisky's Socialist regime, four neo-Nazi organizations have been dissolved, 10 neo-Nazi meetings were banned, 18 non-Austrian neo-Nazis have been declared *persona non gratae* in Austria and 175 were reported to district attorneys.

Blecha also referred to the large neo-Nazi trial last year which ended with prison sentences for all of the accused, although several of the sentences were suspended.

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS GROUP FORCEFULLY ADDRESSES ISSUE OF NAZI WAR CRIMINALS AND THE ROLE OF THE U.S. GOVERNMENT
By Rochelle Saidel

PHILADELPHIA, April 23 (JTA) -- The American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, for the first time since its inception, forcefully addressed the issue of Nazi war criminals and the role of the American government.

Addressing the issue on three fronts, the Gathering was the site of a Senate Subcommittee hearing where survivors presented eye-witness testimony against Nazi war criminal Josef Mengele and a panel discussion on bringing war criminals to justice, that culminated in a resolution urging Congress to change legal "loopholes" used by war criminals to avoid deportation from the U.S.

At an official hearing of the juvenile justice subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, chaired by Arlen Specter (R. Pa.), testimony included accounts by victims of Mengele, the notorious doctor at Auschwitz who performed inhuman experiments on camp inmates.

Eye-Witness Accounts

Among the eye-witnesses who testified were Pearl and Helen Herskovic from Illinois, twin sisters who were in the early 20s when at Auschwitz. Pearl recalled that she had asked another inmate where her family was and the inmate pointed to smoke belching from the chimney of the crematorium and said, "there is your family." Herskovic added, "Meanwhile, ashes were falling on our arms."

Hans Brown, a gypsy inmate at Auschwitz, now living in Ontario, said he witnessed a small gypsy child being experimented on by Mengele. He said he saw a syringe break off while Mengele was injecting a substance into the spinal area of a young child. The child died soon thereafter, he said.

Neal Sher, director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), told the subcommittee that Attorney General Edwin Meese is "fully supportive" of the OSI's work, that the OSI staff and budget is sufficient and that he is "getting all the cooperation we seek" from government agencies. Six out of a staff of 50 are assigned to the Mengele case, Sher said. The budget for fiscal year 1985 for the OSI is \$3.2 million.

Warns Of New Form Of Indifference

Elizabeth Holtzman, the Brooklyn District Attorney, meanwhile, said at the panel discussion that the question of Nazi war criminals "arises from indifference during the war" and that today "we face a new form of indifference -- the spirit of reconciliation."

Holtzman, a former Congresswoman and long active in the pursuit of Nazi war criminals in the United States, called for creation of a government commission to uncover the full story of how and why the U.S. allowed entry of and collaboration with Nazi war criminals. "We must expose the people who are responsible," she said. "If they can't be tried by our courts they can be tried by the verdict of history."

Charles Allen Jr., author and expert on Nazi war criminals, called for adherence to the Nuremberg principles stated in the Moscow Declaration of 1953 that Nazi war criminals should be "delivered to their accusers in order that justice may be done."

He and Holtzman addressed the issue of attacks on the OSI by various Baltic and Ukrainian groups that have been accused of trying to undermine OSI efforts. Holtzman said we now have "pro-Nazi forces" standing up in favor of people the government is trying to deport. Allen tied the efforts of the emigre groups to thwart the OSI to neo-Nazism, anti-Semitism and racism.

Martin Mendelsohn, a former Justice Department official and now Counsel to the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said that Nazi war criminals could be punished only in countries where their crimes were committed. He expressed gratification over the recent U.S. court decision that war criminal John Demjanjuk be extradited to Israel to stand trial for his war crimes.

Gathering Adopts A Resolution

The Gathering also adopted a resolution urging that Congress change legal procedures "so that the criminals cannot exploit the loopholes in the law to further delay their deportation to the countries where they will face the bar of justice." The resolution also referred to statements by "ethnic Americans" criticizing the work of the OSI.

It was also announced that the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors formed itself into a national membership organization, with Benjamin Meed of New York City, a survivor, as its president.

TWO SOLONS SUPPORT EFFORTS TO GET ARAB COUNTRIES TO AGREE TO FACE-TO-FACE TALKS WITH ISRAEL
By David Friedman

ARLINGTON, Va., April 23 (JTA) -- The Reagan Administration's effort to get Arab countries to agree to face-to-face negotiations with Israel as the next step in the Middle East peace process, was supported by two U.S. Senators before a predominantly Jewish audience last night.

Sen. Richard Lugar (R. Ind.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and Sen. Howell Heflin (D. Ala.) made their appeal before an overflow audience of more than 1,500 persons at the banquet of the 26th annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) at the Crystal City Hyatt Regency Hotel here.

Their remarks followed Secretary of State George Shultz's address to the opening session Sunday in which he declared, "Now is the time for the Arabs to let negotiations proceed."

Noting that President Reagan has called for direct negotiations and that the U.S. should not be a "surrogate," Lugar declared, "If Arab nations cannot sit down and talk directly with Israel, then what promise do any future agreements really hold?"

Lugar stressed that the U.S. "remains vitally interested" in the Middle East peace process, but "we cannot control it and we cannot compel the parties to accept it." However, he added:

"We look to each of the nations of the Middle East to shoulder its responsibilities in bringing peace in the region. With some nations, to be sure, the prospects for responsible action are greater than with others. But we cannot exempt any nation from the obligations of civil discourse and adherence to the time-honored norms of international behavior.

"For this reason, I would call upon all nations who have not done so to end the formal state of war with the nation of Israel."

Heflin said there are two steps needed for the peace process to move forward successfully. "First, the legitimate Arab states must recognize the existence of Israel, and second, they must demonstrate a willingness to negotiate directly with Israel."

Praises Jerusalem As Free of Strife

Heflin, who made his first visit to Israel two weeks ago, said he found in Jerusalem a unified city free of strife. "I saw Moslems, Christians and Jews worship freely," he recalled.

"They live side-by-side and enjoy a spiritual freedom and economic prosperity never known there before. The Moslem holy places are completely protected and respected, as are the sites sacred to Judaism and Christianity. The government of Israel and Mayor (Teddy) Kollek have established that peace and co-existence can be structured and practiced in the Middle East."

Noting that his stay in Israel coincided with Passover, Heflin said he visited an absorption center for Ethiopian Jews who, he said, "truly illustrated the Passover story -- slavery to freedom. 'Operation Moses' makes hollow the charge that 'Zionism is racism' and proclaims Zionism as a national liberation movement of the Jewish people without color barriers."

Statements By Peres And Reagan

Meier Rosenne, Israel's Ambassador to the U.S., read a cable from Premier Shimon Peres in which he said, "We are grateful and inspired by the work you have done at strengthening the ties between our two countries, two democracies working together for a better and more peaceful world."

President Reagan, in a message to AIPAC, declared: "U.S.-Israel relations, always close, are warmer and stronger than ever. Israel has a special place in the minds and hearts of Americans." Reagan pledged that the U.S. commitment to Israel "remains iron-clad."

SENATE UNIT EXPECTED TO APPROVE GENOCIDE CONVENTION

By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, April 23 (JTA) -- An international treaty banning genocide is expected to win the approval of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee this week for the sixth time since the U.S. signed the convention 36 years ago.

But some long-standing supporters of Senate approval fear that a proposed reservation introduced by the committee's chairman, Sen. Richard Lugar (R. Ind.), will dilute the substance of the convention to the point where ratification is meaningless.

The reservation would make jurisdiction of the World Court in considering cases of alleged genocide or attempted genocide contingent on the consent of all parties in the dispute. It was introduced partly in response to Nicaragua's use of the Court last spring to charge the U.S. with having violated international law by mining Nicaraguan harbors. The Reagan Administration rejected the Court's jurisdiction at that time.

But Lugar's proposal -- endorsed by the Administration -- is also seen as a way of overcoming the obstacles that have stalled the treaty's passage since the U.S. signed the document in 1948. It is a modified version of more extensive modification proposed by Sen. Jesse Helms (R. N.C.) who managed to block ratification last autumn with a threatened filibuster.

He and a number of other conservatives have maintained that the treaty as it stands would compromise U.S. sovereignty.

The International Convention on the Prevention of Genocide has been signed by 96 countries including the U.S. since it was concluded in response to the Nazi atrocities against the Jews. Every President except Eisenhower has since endorsed it, including President Reagan who came out publicly in favor of ratification in an address to the B'nai B'rith International last September. Jewish organizations have actively promoted Senate approval of the Convention.

Appalling Attitude Toward International Law

In a speech at Georgetown University last night, Sen. William Proxmire (D. Wis.), who for years has called for ratification of the convention every day that the Senate is in session, said the Lugar reservation reflected an appalling attitude toward international law. He maintained that no other major nation except the Soviet Union has included reservations in its approval of the convention.

Lugar's reservation, apparently introduced on the initiative of the Administration, has a good chance of winning passage by the committee, Proxmire speculated. He said the reservation contradicts the sentiment expressed in a resolution adopted last autumn by a vote of 87-2 as a temporary alternative to ratification. That resolution endorsed the principles of the convention and pledged to expedite its ratification during this year.

Proxmire suggested that the controversy over Reagan's visit to the Bitburg military cemetery next month could move some Senators on the committee against the Lugar reservation as a gesture to victims of the Holocaust who have been appealing unsuccessfully for a change in the President's itinerary.

"I think that the terrible blunder that the President has made will help us. It can't do anything else," Proxmire said in response to a question.

Even if a modified ratification bill is moved from the Committee to the Senate floor on Thursday, the new reservation does not guarantee immediate passage. In the meantime, Proxmire told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, that despite his opposition to any reservation he would vote in favor of a modified ratification bill if that is what reaches the Senate floor. "It would be with a heavy heart, but we'll pass it. You have to settle for what you can get in this world," Proxmire said.

'EVENING OF COMMEMORATION' HELD AT ASSEMBLY OF THE AMERICAN GATHERING OF JEWISH HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

By Kevin Freeman

PHILADELPHIA, April 23 (JTA) -- Thousands of Jewish Holocaust survivors and their families attended an "evening of commemoration" through the performing arts at the Civic Center here, as part of the three-day Inaugural Assembly of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

Elie Wiesel, chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, which sponsored the commemorative evening, told the survivors that "If our testimony had been accepted as witnesses, what happened last week would not have happened." This was an apparent reference to the controversy over President Reagan's planned visit to the Bitburg military cemetery in West Germany where Waffen SS soldiers are buried.

"This is the beginning, if it is permitted to continue, of the rehabilitation of the SS," Wiesel declared. "I know nobody here wants it and nobody in this country wants it. We must warn others."

The commemorative evening formally concluded a week of national observances of the Holocaust -- Days of Remembrance -- that included public ceremonies in every state capital. The commemoration here included a screening of the documentary, "The Final Solution," produced by Arthur Cohn.

'A Tragedy ... For All Humankind'

The evening's events also included a program of poems and other writings that were read by entertainment figures and news personalities. David Wyman, author of "Abandonment of the Jews," received sustained applause when he was introduced. He told the survivors that the Holocaust was "certainly a Jewish tragedy."

"But it was not only a Jewish tragedy, but also a Christian tragedy, a tragedy for Western civilization and for all humankind," Wyman said. He said the mass killings during the Holocaust were perpetrated "by people to other people while still other people stood by."

Computer Bank Helps Find Survivors

Prior to the evening's ceremonies, survivors and family members visited the "survivors village" at the Civic Center where survivors made use of a computer bank linked to a national registry of Jewish Holocaust survivors containing more than 55,000 names.

Amy Rothberg of the Computer Center said many survivors are "primarily interested in people who haven't been heard from since the war." A similar system was set up at the Jerusalem Gathering in 1981 and the Gathering in 1983 in Washington.

Survivors, with the aid of interviewers, all volunteers, filled out search forms with names of persons they are trying to locate. Some added details such as maiden names, hometowns in Europe and place of birth, Rothberg said.

Names are then inserted into the computer system using a soundex system, similar to that of the national archives, where the computer will locate names sounding similar although there may be variations in spelling. Miller, for example, may come on the computer as Mueller, Rothberg explained.

"This increases the possibilities of the search," she said. She recalled one man who put in the search for a woman who was the childhood friend of his mother. They located her, although by that time it was too late. The man's mother had died last year.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES AN UNWILLING EXILE

By Rochelle Sidel

NEW YORK, April 23 (JTA) -- In 1985, German Jewish artist Felix Nussbaum is being described by officials of his hometown of Osnabrueck, Germany, as an "honored citizen." In 1933, the talented 29-year-old artist was forced to cease studying at the Berlin Academy's Villa Massimo in Rome. From that year when Hitler took power until Nussbaum's life was ended in Auschwitz in 1944, he was not ever described as "honored" by the citizens of Osnabrueck.

For the 11 years between 1933 and 1944, Nussbaum continued to paint, while exiled and hiding in Belgium. He was never to return to his native city, nor to his native land.

Last week, a new generation of Osnabrueck officials were at the Jewish Museum here to launch Nussbaum's first American retrospective (on view until August 4). The exhibit includes paintings, as well as drawings, and documents from public and private collections in Germany, Israel, and the United States, and is presented by the Jewish Museum with the cooperation of the Kulturgeschichtliches Museum in Osnabrueck and Goethe House in New York.

Nussbaum's admiration for Vincent Van Gogh, Henri Rousseau, Giorgio de Chirico is obvious in the early works displayed, but his unique style and sensitivity seem to grow greater as he expresses through his painting the personal and political crises that he faces.

Some of his paintings are highly symbolic, evoking the hell of a 15th century Hieronymus Bosch or the 20th century James Ensor. Others show the influence of the pathos of Picasso's Blue Period and German Expressionism. His art is both a universal representation of the times and events through which he lived and painted, and his expression of his own personal ordeal.

A Highlight Of The Show

A highlight of the show is Nussbaum's "Self Portrait with Jewish Identity Card," painted in 1943. He depicts himself driven into a corner, holding up his identity card marked "Juif-Jood" (Jew).

Nussbaum's first cousin, Shulamit Jaari, who has been instrumental in reviving interest in the artist, came from Israel to New York to attend the Jewish Museum opening. During World War II, she fled from Germany to Holland and was a member of the Dutch resistance. Although she has worked with officials from Osnabrueck to bring her cousin's paintings to the attention of the world, she admits to mixed feelings.

Jaari was quick to point out a significant feature of the "Self Portrait with Jewish Identity Card" painting. Nussbaum had first painted in and then carefully painted out the word "Osnabrueck" on the identity card in the painting. He knew that he was not then an "honored citizen" but an unwilling exile.

He is said to have told a friend: "If I perish, do not let my pictures die; show them to the public." It is somewhat ironic that the Jewish Museum and the Osnabrueck Museum have collaborated to do so, 41 years after Nussbaum's murder by the Nazis. But irony aside, Nussbaum was an extraordinary talent and his painting speak volumes. They should be seen by anyone who wants to begin to understand the Holocaust in a political and social, as well as a personal and Jewish, context.