

Vol. 63 - 68th Year

Friday, April 26, 1985

No. 80

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES EXPECTED TO VOTE ON RESOLUTION NEXT WEEK ASKING REAGAN NOT TO VISIT BITBURG
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 25 (JTA) — The House is expected to vote next Tuesday on a resolution asking President Reagan not to visit a West German military cemetery where members of the Waffen SS are buried.

Rep. Robert Torricelli (D. N.J.) has introduced a resolution as an amendment to the State Department's appropriations bill. As of today, he had gathered 80 co-sponsors, according to his press assistant, Michael Hill.

Hill said that Torricelli hopes the resolution will convince Reagan that his visit to the Bitburg cemetery is "not in the best interests of the United States."

However, aides to both Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl reiterated this week that the President plans to go through with the ceremony at the graves of German soldiers who died in World War II.

Meanwhile, Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R. Ka.), a wounded veteran of World War II, said this week that it would be a "mistake" for Reagan to go to the cemetery. But he indicated he would be opposed to any Senate resolution against the Bitburg visit.

BITTER DEBATE IN GERMAN PARLIAMENT OVER REAGAN'S VISIT TO BITBURG
By David Kantor

BONN, April 25 (JTA) — President Reagan's fiercely controversial plan to visit the Bitburg military cemetery where the graves of some 47 members of the notorious Waffen SS are among the 2,000 Wehrmacht soldiers buried there, triggered a bitter debate in the Bundestag today.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its coalition partners mustered their majority to defeat a motion by the pacifist Green Party to cancel the Bitburg visit. It also rejected a motion by the much larger opposition faction, the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which held Kohl to blame for the mishandling of Reagan's visit and consequent damage to West Germany's image and German-American relations.

Kohl heatedly defended the scheduled visit to Bitburg and insisted that it was justified as "a gesture of reconciliation and a recognition of Germany's peaceful policies." According to chief government spokesman Peter Boenisch, German-American relations would be severely damaged if Reagan were to cancel his visit to Bitburg.

Boenisch spoke in response to suggestions that the government offer an alternative site where the President could pay tribute to post-war German democracy without appearing to honor the Nazis of whom the SS, both in symbol and fact, were the most fanatic killers.

So far the Kohl government is standing tough. Officials insist that a change in Reagan's itinerary is neither desirable nor necessary. Last week Boenisch went on television to declare that Bonn would oppose any attempts to start a process of "de-Nazification of dead soldiers."

But the opposition has been equally relentless. Peter Glotz, Secretary General of the SPD, continued to denounce Alfred Dregger, leader of the CDU-Bundstag faction, for having sent a letter of protest to 53 U.S. Senators who spoke out against Reagan's visit to Bitburg.

According to Glotz, Dregger is trying to appeal to a constituency of "incorrigibles" who pass off the Nazi era as an accident of history with no lasting consequences. He said Dregger was seeking to create the impression that a small minority of Nazis once succeeded in imposing their rule on the German people as a whole.

Another government politician, Deputy Foreign Minister Alois Mertes, suggested that Jews are really not so upset over Reagan's plans. Speaking of signs of "hope and encouragement", he referred to an invitation he received from the American Jewish Committee to participate in their 79th annual meeting in New York from May 1-5. An aide to Mertes said this was the first time the AJCommittee had invited a German politician to address its annual conference. He said the invitation came from the organization's president, Howard Friedman.

EUROPEAN JEWRY REPORTED TO BE 'PROFOUNDLY DISTRESSED AND OUTRAGED' BY REAGAN'S VISIT TO WAR CEMETERY
By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, April 25 (JTA) — President Reagan was urged yesterday by the European branch of the World Jewish Congress to cancel his planned visit to the Bitburg military cemetery in West Germany where German war dead, including at least 47 Waffen SS soldiers, are buried.

In a telegram to the President, the WJC European section chairman Greville Janner said European Jewry was "profoundly distressed and outraged" by the planned visit to Bitburg. "We presume that this insensitive gesture can only be the result of bad advice which we urge you to reject," the telegram said.

Janner, a member of British Parliament and President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, speaking to the WJC American Section here, said, "I am astonished that a man who has been regarded as a person of sensitivity and understanding, not least for Jewish causes, would even consider the possibility of visiting the graves of Nazis."

The American section of the WJC, at its regularly scheduled session, was to have heard a report from Janner on his official visit to the Jewish communities and governmental leaders of India, Singapore, New Zealand and Australia from where he just returned. But the continuing controversy over Reagan's intention to visit Bitburg and lay a wreath on graves of German soldiers dominated the meeting.

Following the general meeting, attended by representatives of all the 32-member organizations of the WJC-American Section, the nine-member executive committee adopted several resolutions which included an endorsement of a mass demonstration in Lafayette Park across from the White House, scheduled for May 5, in protest against the planned Bitburg visit.

At the same time, Kenneth Bialkin, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said yesterday after a separate meeting of the Conference that the heads of Catholic and Protestant church groups, labor unions, veterans organizations, and civil rights groups were being invited to participate in the Lafayette Park rally.

The rally, sponsored by the Washington Jewish Community Council, is expected to draw Jewish leaders from throughout the country, and will be followed by a ceremonial visit by a small group to Arlington National Cemetery, Bialkin announced. He added that local Jewish community groups across the country were planning to visit local U.S. military cemeteries on May 5, the day Reagan is scheduled to lay a wreath at Bitburg.

Bialkin said, "No one challenges the President's goal of reconciliation" with West Germany. "Reconciliation is a fact. It requires no honor to the German war dead to confirm the new friendship and mutual respect that exists today between Washington and Bonn, a relationship based in large part on the vast amounts of economic aid our country provided and the military protection we give still to the new Germany."

Demonstration Planned At Cemetery Gates

At the WJC-American Section meeting, the executive committee also endorsed the decision for members of European Jewry to demonstrate outside the gates of the Bitburg cemetery when Reagan goes there in two weeks. The WJC will also ask its leaders in 69 countries to meet with American Ambassadors and urge that they request to the President that he not go to Bitburg.

At the conclusion of the general membership meeting, Israel Singer, secretary general of the World Jewish Congress, spoke by telephone with the West German Ambassador in Washington, Guenther Van Well. The Ambassador informed Singer that there has been no change in the plans to visit Bitburg. Singer met Tuesday night in Washington with the Ambassador on the issue.

Singer, meanwhile, speaking to reporters after the meeting yesterday, strongly suggested that Marshall Breger, the Reagan Administration's liaison official for the Jewish community, should resign over the Bitburg controversy. "I would resign," Singer said, "if I had no effect on something that has such a profound effect on the Jewish people."

Breger has come under increased criticism from some leaders in the American Jewish community for his reported efforts in advance to try and soften Elie Wiesel's criticism of the Bitburg visit before Wiesel spoke at the White House last Friday.

SOMBER INDEPENDENCE DAY IN ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 25 (JTA) — Israelis celebrated the 37th anniversary of their independence today in a less than joyous mood. Festivities were muted. There were far fewer flags on display than in past

years, less bunting and ribbon-bedecked portraits of national leaders on commercial premises, more modest decorations and fewer colored lights on public buildings, reflecting budget cuts and the high cost of electricity.

For the first time since the anguished days following the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the national spirit is low. It was mirrored in President Chaim Herzog's Independence Day address, broadcast on radio and television last night.

He dwelt on what he saw as the most serious threats to Israeli society: the "grave economic crisis", the armed conflict in Lebanon not yet fully ended and, "internal problems that give me particular cause for concern" — extremism, fanaticism, racism, which threaten the fabric of Israel's democracy.

Sullen, heavily overcast skies, chill winds and unseasonably low temperatures contributed to the somber mood though they did not keep tens of thousands of Israelis from the beaches, picnic grounds and camping sites. By mid-morning, parking lots were filled to capacity at those sites.

Thousands more Israelis, many accompanied by their children, strolled through military bases and installations which traditionally are open to the public on Independence Day. They viewed the new, sophisticated weaponry and other equipment of the Israel Defense Force, military hardware they had heard or read about but never had a chance to see.

Nevertheless, Herzog's words appear to have had an impact. "This 37th Independence Day falls in a difficult time, but one not without hope and expectation," he said. "We are still in the throes of a grave economic crisis, the armed struggle in Lebanon has not yet been concluded, and peace is still not assured on our northern borders."

Extremism Is Of Particular Concern

The Chief of State added: "It is our internal problems that give me particular cause for concern. Extremism still flourishes and to our sorrow, marginal elements in our society — particularly young people — have become the captives of strange, violent doctrines held by fanatical groups, alien to the true spirit of Israel."

"On the margins of our society, we hear advocacy of racist concepts and of actions that contradict the Torah and tradition of Israel and the values of our society. The tensions in religious circles have also become more severe and give cause for anxiety because of their characteristic tendency to escalate, and the very few factors preaching and practicing moderation and restraint."

The President singled out no group or individual. But in a country as small as Israel, specifics are not necessary. The public knows to what and whom he referred.

YITZHAK KAHAN DEAD AT 72

JERUSALEM, April 25 (JTA) — Yitzhak Kahan, former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court who conducted the inquiry into the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camp massacres in 1982-83, was buried in Haifa today. He died yesterday at the age of 72. Kahan was born in Lemberg, Austria-Hungary. He studied law and economics before immigrating to Palestine in 1935.

One of Israel's most prominent jurists, Kahan served on the Bench for over 40 years. He was appointed to the Supreme Court 15 years ago and retired in 1983, shortly after the findings of the Kahan commission were published.

The commission, headed by Kahan, was established as a result of an unprecedented outpouring of senti-

ment in Israel over the massacre of hundreds of Palestinian civilians by Christian Phalangists, then allies of Israel, at the two refugee camps in West Beirut in September, 1982. Premier Menachem Begin, who initially opposed the inquiry, named Kahar, a religious Jew, to head the panel. Kahar selected Supreme Court Justice Aharon Barak and Gen. (res.) Yona Efrat as its other members.

Their report, published in February, 1983, was critical of several leading Israeli political and military figures, including Begin himself. It found the then Defense Minister, Ariel Sharon, indirectly responsible for the massacre for failing to prevent the Phalangists from entering the refugee camps located in an area under the control of the Israel Defense Force. Sharon was forced to resign, but Begin retained him in his Cabinet as a Minister-Without-Portfolio.

SENATE UNIT DEADLOCKED OVER A "PACKAGE OF CONDITIONS" FOR RATIFYING THE GENOCIDE CONVENTION By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, April 25 (JTA) — The Senate Foreign Relations Committee remained deadlocked today over a "package of conditions" demanded by conservatives for ratification of the international convention against genocide which the United States signed 36 years ago.

Supporters of ratification of the document as it stands, made it clear that they would vote against it on the Senate floor if the conditions, which they feel water down the spirit and concept of the anti-genocide pact, are adopted.

Conservatives, who express concern that the treaty would compromise U.S. sovereignty, indicated that without the conditions, there would be stronger opposition to ratification than there was when the convention failed on the Senate floor last fall.

The Conditions Outlined

The condition most vigorously demanded by conservatives, notably Sen. Jesse Helms (R., N.C.), would make jurisdiction of the World Court in cases of alleged or attempted genocide contingent on U.S. consent when the U.S. is a party to the dispute. Another condition would bar submission of cases involving the U.S. to a "Penal Tribunal," which is mentioned in the convention but which does not now exist, unless a separate treaty is concluded for that purpose.

The Reagan Administration has endorsed ratification in principle, with certain changes of language. The package of conditions was strongly supported by Sen. Richard Lugar (R., Ind.), the committee chairman, who warned today that the "concerns" of conservatives "have been sufficient to block ratification of the convention for 36 years" and "if they are not addressed they will be sufficient to block ratification during this Congress as well."

But Sen. Charles Mathias (R., Md.) said he would not go along with the limitation of the jurisdiction of the World Court even if it meant a filibuster on the Senate floor. He said he would oppose the conditions "on principle."

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D., Conn.) said he would try to find a compromise to end the deadlock. But it became clear from today's deliberations that there

could be no compromise on the World Court issue that would satisfy both Dodd and Helms. Helms repeated today a suggestion he made at previous hearings that Israel could be victimized by exploitation of the World Court under the treaty. Addressing himself "to our Jewish friends" who have lobbied strongly for ratification, Helms suggested "that one of the first nations to be hauled before the international court is going to the State of Israel."

Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, who testified at today's hearings, also referred to Israel. In response to a question, he said that Israel, which signed the convention without reservations in 1949, has taken the position that it cannot accept World Court jurisdiction without its consent.

But Dodd observed that no nation, not even Iraq, Egypt or Saudi Arabia, all of which have signed the convention, has ever attempted to raise charges of genocide against Israel or to use the World Court for that purpose.

The committee adjourned today without setting a date for its next hearing on the issue.

IDF SOLDIER DIES OF WOUNDS

TEL AVIV, April 25 (JTA) — The 654th Israel Defense Force soldier to die as a result of action in Lebanon, was buried today — Independence Day — at the Carmel Beach cemetery in Haifa. Pvt. Baruch Stern, 20, of Kiryat Shmuel, succumbed yesterday to wounds he suffered three weeks ago in a bomb explosion at the Kasmiye bridge over the Litani River in south Lebanon.

TEXTILE MILLS IN HAIFA ORDERED SHUT UNLESS BUYER CAN BE FOUND By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 25 (JTA) — The Haifa District Court ordered the bankrupt Ata textile mills complex on Haifa Bay to cease operations by May 15 unless a buyer can be found before then for the financially distressed enterprise.

Ata is the largest single employer in the Haifa area and its shut-down will mean dismissal for thousands of workers. Pinchas Grub, chairman of the Ata workers committee, warned only last week that there was a danger of unrest, even rioting, if the employees received sudden dismissal notices.

The court order Monday came as a surprise to Eliezer Peleg, a textile magnate named by the government earlier this year to act as receiver for the ailing firm and try to find a suitable buyer. Peleg indicated on a radio interview that he expected the court to allow him more time, if only to avert mass dismissals.

Peleg has been negotiating with the Clal Finance Co. and the Kitan cotton factory to agree on a buy-out price that would satisfy the Bank Leumi, Ata's principal creditor. But the court informed Peleg yesterday that he should be prepared to dismiss the workers and close the mills on May 15. He was instructed to hire a security company to guard the mill property.

Peleg said he was hopeful that a reassessment of the value of the real estate involved would persuade Bank Leumi to accept the latest offers made by potential buyers.

SOME 300 CATHOLIC AND JEWISH THEOLOGICAL SCHOLARS, CLERICS MARK 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF NOSTRA AETATE By Lisa Palmieri-Billig

ROME, April 25 (JTA) -- On October 28, 1965, Vatican Council II promulgated the famous declaration, "Nostra Aetate" (In Our Time) a milestone in relations between the Roman Catholic Church and Judaism. For the first time in 2,000 years, the Church formally repudiated the idea of collective guilt of the Jewish people for the crucifixion of Jesus.

Last week, some 300 theological scholars, Catholics and Jews, clergy and laymen, gathered at the St. Thomas Aquinas Pontifical University -- The Angelicum -- here to mark the 20th anniversary of the event, to ponder its effects on Catholic-Jewish relations over the past two decades and its implications for the future. The gathering was officially titled "Nostra Aetate: Twenty Years in Retrospect."

It culminated last Friday in a Papal audience with the participants, followed by the first press conference ever organized by the Association of International Vatican Journalists on the theme of Jewish-Catholic dialogue. Scholars of both faiths were invited to answer questions.

Added Significance Of The Colloquium

The colloquium had added significance. It occurred as the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany and the liberation of the death camps approached. The Pope had moving words about the Holocaust.

The Nostra Aetate said the Church "decries" anti-Semitism. A later official Vatican document substituted the stronger word, "condemns." It referred to "the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews" and directed the Catholic world "to foster and recommend that mutual understanding and respect which is the fruit, above all, of Biblical and theological studies, as well as of fraternal dialogues."

The retrospective, in effect a survey of what all of this has meant, was organized and sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and three Catholic interreligious organizations -- the Pontifical University, Centro Pro Unione, and Sisters of Zion (SIDIC) in cooperation with the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, represented by Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, president of the Commission and Msgr. Jorge Mejia, its secretary.

At the Papal audience, Rabbi Ronald Sobel, senior rabbi of Temple Emanu-El in New York and chairman of the ADL's intergroup relations committee, observed that "The past two decades of relations between the Jewish people and the Church are nothing less than a modern miracle ... reversing 2,000 years of previous relationship ... Truly, this is God's doing."

Totalitarianism Of Left And Right Denounced

Addressing the opening session of the colloquium, Nathan Perlmuter, national director of the ADL, denounced totalitarianism and political extremism of the right or left. He said it was "contemptuous of our personhood ... which is by way of saying, totalitarianism in its actions hates God."

It provided the underpinnings for the Holocaust, he said, adding, in a quotation from historian Han-

nah Arendt, "The Nazis counted on the indifference of the West, on its willingness to see the Jews finally erased from the memory of man"

Pope John Paul II, who addressed the gathering last Friday, also made the point that absence of faith in God brought on the Holocaust. Jews and Christians must get to know each other better "as members of religions closely linked to one another," he said.

He observed that the colloquium was "a sign of maturity in our relations" and the need of both Christians and Jews to believe in God in the present secular context.

Statement By The Pope

Referring to the joint commemoration of Yom Hashoah, the Day of Remembrance of the Holocaust, which took place on the second day of the colloquium, the Pope said: "I note the reference in our program to the catastrophe which so cruelly decimated the Jewish people, before and during the war, especially in the death camps. Let us pray together that it will never happen again, and that whatever we do to get to know each other better, to collaborate with one another and to bear witness to the one God and to his will, as expressed in the Decalogue, will help make people still more aware of the abyss which mankind can fall into when we do not acknowledge other people as brothers and sisters, sons and daughters of the same heavenly father."

Recalling that the colloquium had set aside a time for remembrance of the Holocaust, the Pope added, "And how could we forget that out of the ashes of Auschwitz rose the miracle of Israel."

Purposes Of The Gathering

An earlier speaker, Joseph Lichten, the ADL's representative in Rome for the past 15 years, who explained the purposes of the colloquium before it convened, noted:

"At this moment, the greatest desire of the Jewish communities of the world would be to see diplomatic relations established between the Vatican and Israel, thus formalizing the existing relationship and bearing witness to the true understanding, on the part of the Holy See, of the emotional and religious significance of this land for the Jewish people."

But apart from the Pope's reference to Israel rising from the ashes of Auschwitz, there was no hint of any diplomatic link to the Jewish State.

Sobel, nevertheless, said that American Jews feel that the path undertaken by the Pope toward Israel is constructive. He mentioned as a positive example, the recent meeting between John Paul II and Israel's Premier, Shimon Peres.

Sobel, along with Cardinal Willebrands and Msgr. Mejia deplored the fact that in some places, in some countries in Latin America, "we continue to hear echoes of the teachings of contempt, while in Oberammergau we are witness to themes that have been repudiated by the Church."

They were referring to the Passion Play produced regularly in the Bavarian village of Oberammergau, the theme of which is Jewish culpability for the crucifixion.

The Pope did not escape criticism at the gathering. Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, took him sharply to task for the audience he granted to extreme rightwing members of the Parliament of Europe on April 10. They included Jean-Marie Le Pen, leader of the National Front in France, whom Zevi called "that notorious French xenophobe and anti-Semite."