

REAGAN INTENDS TO VISIT BITBURG CEMETERY BUT MAY NOT LAY A WREATH ON THE GRAVES OF THE GERMAN SOLDIERS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) — President Reagan, who leaves for Bonn on Tuesday, intends to go through with his visit to a German military cemetery on May 5 but it is doubtful now that he will lay a wreath on the graves of the German soldiers as originally planned.

This was confirmed by White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan in an appearance on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" today. He said that "the details are still being worked out exactly what happens" when Reagan goes to the Bitburg military cemetery where some 2,000 German soldiers, including 47 members of the Waffen SS, are buried.

But Regan stressed that the cemetery visit will be only 10 to 15 minutes while Reagan will spend more than an hour the same day at the site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

Says Regan Is 'Wounded In His Heart'

The White House aide said that the President feels "anguish" over the strong controversy that the cemetery visit has raised since the President "feels that he has been a friend, as he is, to Jews everywhere." He said Reagan has been "a staunch friend of Israel, probably the staunchest of many Presidents" and helped bring Ethiopian Jews out of the Sudan and has been working for the emigration of Soviet Jews.

Regan is "wounded in his heart" also by the charges of "insensitivity when he is a very sensitive person," Regan said.

But he stressed that Reagan cannot cancel the visit which he said is part of a 10-day trip to Europe because he made a promise to West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and he will "carry out his word that he will go there with an ally."

Regan denied that the White House had been privately encouraging Republicans in Congress to support resolutions urging Reagan to cancel the visit as a means of pressuring Kohl to withdraw the invitation.

Senate Adopts A Resolution

The Senate on Friday adopted a resolution by voice vote introduced by Sens. Howard Metzenbaum (D, Ohio) and Arlen Specter (R, Pa.) and co-sponsored by 80 other Senators urging the President to "reassess his planned itinerary" and "visit a symbol of German democracy."

The resolution did not mention Bitburg directly but Metzenbaum said it was clear that was what it meant. It was supported by Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole (R, Kan.). The resolution came a day after 257 Congressmen signed a letter urging Kohl to withdraw the cemetery invitation.

But West German Deputy Foreign Minister Alois Mertes, who also appeared on the CBS program today, said he had spoken to Kohl earlier and there was "no change" in the Chancellor's position.

Also appearing on the program, Specter said that "I think there is a way" that Reagan can keep from going to the cemetery. He noted that the action in the House and Senate reflects a "very strong feeling of the American people."

Specter said that he is still hopeful that Kohl will withdraw the invitation. If not, the Senator suggested the President can cancel the visit on the grounds that the President was given the wrong information about the cemetery. He said a White House official had told him that the West German government had assured them that there were no SS troopers buried at Bitburg.

But Mertes said that when he represented the Bitburg area in Parliament he had not known that the SS members were buried there. At the same time, he said Waffen SS soldiers were buried in all German cemeteries and it was wrong to find them all "collectively guilty." Mertes said the Senate resolution was an "insult against all former German soldiers of the second World War" since it implied all were Nazis.

Specter replied no insult was intended but the cemetery visit would be "an affront" to all American World War II veterans, American Jews and Holocaust survivors and victims.

Says Cancellation Would Upset German People

Mertes said that if the cemetery visit is cancelled it would upset the German people because they would feel they are being charged with "collective guilt" for the Nazi era and "the past is more important than the last 40 years."

He said the cemetery visit is "not glorifying" the deeds of the Nazi regime or even military matters. He said its purpose is to demonstrate that "during the years after the war we do everything that never again there will be dictatorship in Germany, that never again there will be a war coming from German soil."

Mertes stressed that in Germany today there is "full understanding for the victims of the Holocaust particularly the Jews who were not killed as soldiers. They were simply slaughtered, murdered because they were Jews. They cannot be compared with victims of the war on the military side."

Prominent Jews Decline To Accompany Regan

In other developments, the Administration has reportedly asked at least two prominent Jews — Elie Wiesel and Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal — to go along with Regan when he goes to the military cemetery at Bitburg. Both declined the invitation. Other Holocaust survivors have reportedly been sought to accompany the President. They, too, have reportedly declined.

Meanwhile, four prominent Republican Jewish leaders — Max Fisher, Richard Fox, Gordon Zachs and George Klein — have met in recent weeks with Chief of Staff Regan and other White House officials on the Bitburg controversy. The four led the Republican National Jewish Coalition.

Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority and a strong supporter of Reagan, added his name to the chorus of opposition to the Bitburg visit. Saying he believed the President "and/or his staff made an honest mistake," Falwell told the Conference of Presidents

of Major American Jewish Organizations in a telephone message that "I think the President should admit he was wrong — and I don't think it would be an indication of weakness for him to do so."

The Jewish War Veterans' national commander Samuel Greenberg has appealed to all Americans to wear a red armband on May 5 to remind "us of the precious lives lost in World War II" and to protest Reagan's cemetery visit.

Leaders of the United Synagogue and the Rabbinical Assembly said they would observe May 5 as a "day of mourning, prayer and fasting."

The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the U.S. and Canada has urged Reagan to cancel his planned visit. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein, president of the Union, called the proposed visit an "obscenity for the victims and martyrs of various countries."

New York City Council president Carol Bellamy told some 200 women at the Bnai Zion Women's League Annual luncheon in New York that "we must demand that our President heed the call to a higher moral value than even the values of reconciliation and friendship with a former enemy."

SOME 150 AMERICANS AND CHRISTIANS SIGN OPEN LETTER URGING REAGAN NOT TO VISIT THE BITBURG CEMETERY

NEW YORK, April 28 (JTA) — Some 150 "Americans and Christians" signed an "Open Letter to President Reagan" urging him to change his mind "and to choose instead of Bitburg another place that would be a clear and unmistakable symbol of reverence and reconciliation" with Germany. The letter appeared in several major newspapers today.

The signers stated that "we feel morally compelled to stand with our Jewish brothers and sisters and to express our profound disappointment over your decision to visit Bitburg cemetery where 47 members of the SS are buried.

"We are shocked by the insensitivity and inaccuracy of your explanation that the German soldiers buried there 'were victims, just as surely as the victims in the concentration camps'.

"The failure to distinguish between perpetrators and victims, between the death of combatants in battle and the slaughter of innocents in the Nazi concentration camps does injustice not only to the memory of the dead but to the most basic tenets of Jewish and Christian morality."

The signers suggested that instead of Bitburg, Reagan visit the home of the late Konrad Adenauer, "one of the architects of post-war Germany, or a visit to Flensburg KZ, the place where the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was executed. Both men were anti-Nazis and both men asserted their consciences over the demands of the state."

Among the signers of the open letter were: Rt. Rev. Paul Moore, Jr., Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of New York; Jacqueline Wexler, president, National Conference of Christians and Jews; Rev. William Sloane Coffin, Jr., Riverside Church, N.Y.; Rev. John Pawlikowski, Catholic Theological Union, Chicago; Rev. Dr. A. Roy Eckardt, Lehigh University; Prof. Alice Eckardt, Lehigh University. Also Bayard Rustin, president, A. Philip Randolph Institute; John Jacob, president, National Urban League; Benjamin Hooks, executive director, NAACP; Wilburt Tatum, chairman, New York Amsterdam News; Prof. Terrence DesPres, Colgate University, Hamilton, N.Y.; Rt. Rev. John Coburn, Bishop,

Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts; Sister Rose Thering, Seton Hall University; Rev. Malcolm Boyd, Sherman Oaks, Calif.; Rev. Robert Drinan, Georgetown University Law Center; Rev. Edward Flannery, Diocese of Providence, R.I.; and Rev. Dr. Franklin Littell, United Methodist Church.

REAGAN AND KOHL FACE GROWING MOMENTUM OF PROTESTS IN EUROPE

By David Kantor

BONN, April 28 (JTA) — President Reagan and Chancellor Helmut Kohl faced a surging momentum of protests here and elsewhere in Europe over the weekend as they apparently decided to stand tough against appeals that the President cancel his visit to the Bitburg cemetery where he will be honoring members of the notorious Waffen SS along with other fallen German soldiers of World War II.

The protests have, at the same time, generated a backlash in the West German media, ranging from defenses of Reagan's plans in traditionally conservative newspapers to anti-Semitic outbursts against alleged "Jewish power" in the U.S. in at least one picture tabloid.

Appeals continued to be made in West Germany and other countries by Jewish and non-Jewish groups for the President to find a different site to dramatize U.S.-German reconciliation.

They were re-enforced by a resolution adopted by the U.S. Senate last Friday urging Reagan to "reassess his planned itinerary." The resolution, which is not binding, was co-signed by 80 of the 100 members of the Republican controlled Senate and was adopted by voice vote without opposition.

Open Letter To Kohl

Women for Peace, which reportedly has a membership of about 70,000 in West Germany, sent an open letter to Kohl Friday asking him to cancel the memorial service at Bitburg and to "recognize the voice of another Germany with peace movements trying to learn from our history."

The letter stated in part: "Reconciliation between people and the serious remembrance of the guilt and the criminal acts of World War II and the Nazi dictatorship can only be reached through a memorial to those women and men resistance fighters against fascism and German militarism ... We support ... all those initiatives of reconciliation between peoples that do not happen over the graves of the Waffen SS, at military cemeteries or near modern weapon arsenals, as in Bitburg."

Reagan, who flies to Bonn on Tuesday for a Western economic summit meeting, is scheduled to visit the site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp next Sunday, May 5 and, later the same day, the cemetery at Bitburg where he may place a wreath.

Jewish Students Send Letter To Reagan

In Brussels yesterday, the European Union of Jewish Students (EJUS) which has a membership of 40,000 in 17 countries, made public a letter they sent to Reagan asking, "For what reason does one honor individuals so lacking in human sentiment as to be capable of organizing without the least scruple the extermination of their fellow human beings?"

The letter also asked: "Why does the United States of America now decide to honor them after having witnessed themselves the liberation of the concentration camps, the appalling condition of the survivors and the spectacle of unrestrained genocide in its horrific detail?"

"How can we explain such a profound change in attitudes by which in such a few years, the original sense of profound contempt and disgust in the face of such cruelty can give way to a situation whereby these self-same perpetrators of death and suffering are deemed to be worthy of such an honor?"

The student union also sent a letter to Kohl expressing indignation that Reagan's visit to Bitburg was suggested by his government.

German Press Is Sharply Divided

The West German press, which has focussed intensely on the controversy for the past two weeks, is sharply divided, as demonstrated by the opposing positions taken by two of the country's most respected dailies. The leftist Frankfurter Rundschau declared that the damage to Germany's image and to German-American relations has already been done and the damage is likely to worsen if Kohl insists on the visit, leaving Reagan no way out.

The conservative Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung however praised Kohl for what it called his "impressive speech" defending the Bitburg visit. The paper noted with approval that the Chancellor had made it clear that at Bitburg individuals, not organizations are buried.

The weekly picture magazine Quick loosed an anti-Semitic blast when it proclaimed in a headline "macht und stimmung der Juden" (Power and Voices of the Jews) in the U.S. The headline topped a photograph of Reagan shaking hands with Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of international relations of the American Jewish Committee.

Strong Reactions Against A CDU Leader

Meanwhile, strong reactions continued against Alfred Dregger, chairman of the joint parliamentary faction of Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its Bavarian coalition partner, Christian Social Union (CSU) who recently sent a letter to 53 U.S. Senators opposed to the President's Bitburg visit.

In the letter Dregger, among other things, accused the Senators of insulting the memory of his brother who, as he pointedly noted, died on the Eastern front fighting the Russians in World War II.

A retired general, Gert Bastian, who is an independent member of the Bundestag, took Dregger to task yesterday for the letter that was embarrassing to Germany and "included unbearable doses of arrogance, unwillingness to learn and a holier-than-thou attitude."

Bastian asserted that Dregger's letter demonstrated a refusal to understand that under the Hitler dictatorship, it was far nobler to fight against the Nazi regime than against those who opposed it. He urged Dregger to apologize to the Senators for "confirming the most unflattering prejudices about the self-righteous Germans." He observed that it is beyond President Reagan to give the "general absolution" asked by Dregger.

GERMAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS LEGISLATION DEALING WITH JEWISH HOLOCAUST VICTIMS AND GERMAN VICTIMS OF WAR

By David Kantor

BONN, April 28 (JTA) -- The Bundestag, sharply divided along party lines, adopted legislation late Friday night which would subject to prosecution any individual who claims that Jews

were not systematically killed by the Nazis -- or that Germans themselves were not victims of "genocidal" practices prior to and after the end of World War II.

The law, which in effect equates Jewish victims of the Holocaust with Germans uprooted by the war, hotly debated for months in various versions, is apparently the closest the Bundestag could bring itself to punish deniers of the Holocaust. Many leaders of the West German Jewish community have gone on record as preferring no law to the one adopted.

It was passed by the parliamentary majority commanded by Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and its coalition partners, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU). Strongly opposed were the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) and the Green Party.

The new law does not define denial of the Holocaust as a criminal offense but rather as an insult to surviving victims of the Nazis. The victims may initiate prosecution. The offender, if convicted, would be subject to punishment of up to two years in prison.

The legislation was passed after a 90-minute debate which centered on the equation of Holocaust victims and victims of "other totalitarian regimes", meaning obviously the Soviet Union. In the course of the debate, the Bundestag majority also denounced the annual reunions of SS veterans which have become an embarrassment to the Federal Republic.

About 1,000 former SS officers have scheduled a get-together at the Bavarian town of Nesselwang early next month. President Reagan will be in Germany at the time.

SOME 2,000 PEOPLE MARK ISRAEL'S 37th ANNIVERSARY, MEMORIAL DAY By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, April 28 (JTA) -- The Jewish community here celebrated Israel's 37th anniversary and pledged to identify with the problems of the Jewish State, improve Jewish education and to intensify aliya.

Nerry Bloomfield, president of the Canadian Zionist Federation, told some 2,000 people attending the anniversary celebration at the Expo Theater, "Not only today, but every day we must remember our indelible bonds with Israel." He urged the Canadian Jews to support Israel by redoubling efforts for education and aliya.

Yaacov Aviadi, the Consul General of Israel, brought greetings from Israel and said that in spite of its difficult problems, Israel will strive to make the ingathering of the Jewish people a main objective of its policies. He cited the "unique effort" undertaken by Israel for Ethiopian Jews.

Before the anniversary celebration began, the 2,000 people commemorated Israel's Memorial Day. Earlier in the day, diplomatic representatives, including the Egyptian Consul General, rectors and the deans of the two universities in the city, and numerous visitors attended a reception at the Israel Consulate General given by Aviadi in honor of Israel's 37th anniversary.

CORRECTION

The Moscow Declaration on Nazi war criminals was drawn up in 1943, not 1953 as stated in the April 24 Bulletin.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA A CITY PAYS HOMAGE TO THE SIX MILLION JEWISH HOLOCAUST VICTIMS

By Gerald Regan

ELIZABETH, N.J., April 28 (JTA) -- It is difficult to walk down Jersey Street here without admiring the stately brick facade of the 164-year-old Second Presbyterian Church. But what is nearly impossible to ignore is the blue and white Israeli flag visible through glass doors in the church's vestibule. At night six candles are lit beneath it, representing the first effort of a church elder to pay quiet homage to the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

This past week's Holocaust commemoration here, perhaps typical of those found in many towns and cities in the U.S. with significant Jewish populations, brought other firsts to this city of 100,000 as well. Elizabeth's Mayor Tom Dunn proclaimed the week ending last Sunday as Holocaust Commemoration week and the city sponsored its first Holocaust commemoration ceremony.

Elizabeth's Human Rights Commission, along with the Elmora Hebrew Center, sponsored a Holocaust memorial on Sunday, April 14 in this city 18 miles from Manhattan. The event, held in the Center, drew an audience estimated at 400 people, with as many as 150 of them being non-Jews, according to Rabbi Yale Fishman, who put the program together.

Fishman, also the rabbi of the Center, a "modern Orthodox" synagogue, served as Elizabeth's liaison with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. He said that a priest and several pastors from the city's Protestant communities made remarks during the two-hour ceremony.

The program's main speaker, however, was Fishman's 60-year-old father, Rabbi Eli Fishman, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps and the assistant chief rabbi in Germany following the war.

An Ecumenical Involvement

Fishman called the program, which he was able to publicize with the assistance of posters from the Holocaust Council, the "first ecumenical program that I was involved in." The 29-year-old rabbi has been the head of the center for two years.

The Holocaust commemoration "has given us a good reason to get together and crystalize our involvement together," said Fishman, referring to the city's Christian clergy. He estimates there are about 8,000 to 10,000 Jews in Elizabeth, including 250 families active in his synagogue. He said he and a speaker at the memorial service, Rev. David King, an Episcopalian and head of the Elizabeth Council of Churches, plan to discuss the establishment of an "Ecumenical Council" to further cooperation between the city's Christian and Jewish houses of worship.

Helene Kalish, the Jewish director of the city-funded Human Rights Commission, said the event proved to be important in another respect. She said, "Someone who was present at the ceremony said, 'I didn't know there were any Holocaust survivors alive.'" Fishman estimated that 15 survivors were in attendance, with three taking part in the ceremonial candle lighting.

The creator of the Second Presbyterian Church's display honoring the Holocaust's victims, Joseph Reilly, said that while he was aware of the Holocaust the idea for the church's display only came to him as he saw the extensive Holocaust commemoration on the

major television networks in the week following Easter. The church's display supplanted an Easter cross. Reilly, one of nine "ruling" elders of the church, said he was never before aware of a specific date to commemorate the Holocaust. Otherwise, the 39-year-old salesman for The Singer Company said he would have erected a remembrance every year, just as he has done every May 14 for the past 16 years to commemorate the establishment of Israel.

A Dramatic Display

The display is centered on the gold-fringed, approximately five-foot-by-two-and-half foot flag, which hangs vertically, facing the street. Below the flag, on a step leading into the church's vestibule, is a painting of a bible open to Psalms 23 and 24, which begins "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want ..." taken from the Psalms of David. These are often read during Christian burial rites.

Six candles with blue bulbs rest on a blue velvet-like floor covering. The light from the candles reflecting upon the white field of the flag is dramatic, Reilly pointed out. Blue, he said, in addition to being one of the colors of the flag, is "also the color of healing." The candles, taken from the church's Christmas stock, were suggested by other commemorations he said he saw depicted on television.

Though the display has garnered no comment from city residents, Reilly said he plans on incorporating it into the church's regular display rotation. Quoting from the veteran's memorial in his nearby hometown, he said: "We have a saying in Union (County, N.J.) 'Lest we forget.'"

SHULTZ TO VISIT EGYPT AND JORDAN AFTER VISITING ISRAEL ON MAY 10

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) -- Secretary of State George Shultz will go to Egypt and Jordan after he visits Israel on May 10, the State Department announced.

Department spokesman Bernard Kalb stressed that Shultz is not going to Cairo and Amman as a result of any "dramatic breakthrough" achieved by Richard Murphy, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, during his current visit to the Middle East. "Nor has there been any setback," Kalb added.

The spokesman said that Murphy's "exploratory trip" has been a series of "informative and useful meetings with leaders of the region. We are assessing, in an open frame of mind, initiatives coming from the region," Kalb said.

"We are seeking practical steps that will lead to direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors and ultimately result in a just and lasting peace for the region. We expect this to be a slow, gradually developing process."

Kalb cautioned against expecting "sudden breakthroughs or dramatic events." He reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to President Reagan's September 1 Mideast peace initiative.

PARIS (JTA) -- President Francois Mitterrand, marking the 40th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps, called on the civilized world to remain vigilant against a renewal of racism and anti-Semitism.