

**Reagan's Final Solution To His Bitburg Visit:
'IT IS MORALLY RIGHT WHAT I AM DOING
AND I AM NOT GOING TO CHANGE MY MIND'**
By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, April 30 (JTA) — Declaring that "the final word has been spoken as far as I am concerned," President Reagan defended his planned visit Sunday to the German military cemetery at Bitburg, telling foreign reporters yesterday that "I think it is morally right to do what I am doing and I am not going to change my mind about that."

Vice President George Bush, meanwhile, who has refrained from public statements on the Bitburg controversy, told a United States Chamber of Commerce meeting in Washington yesterday that "Ronald Reagan has not changed on his abhorrence of the Holocaust — he never will. But the time has come for understanding and support for the President."

Secretary of State George Shultz also defended Reagan's visit to Bitburg. In a satellite news conference from Washington to Bonn today, he brushed aside criticism and predicted that the critics "in the end may wind up admiring the person who has stood by his decision." Asked if Reagan would not pay a political price for his decision, Shultz said, "The political price would be heavier if he didn't."

Nevertheless, opposition continued to mount as members of Congress and Jewish organizations scheduled a variety of counter-actions in protest of Reagan's scheduled 15 minute stop at the German military cemetery where at least 47 SS soldiers are buried among the some 2,000 German war dead.

Reagan Blames Media For The Controversy

Reagan defended his planned visit to the Bitburg military cemetery on the eve of his departure to West Germany in a television interview with reporters from six nations participating in this week's Bonn economic summit. He blamed the controversy surrounding the planned visit on the media, saying "they've gotten hold of something, and like a dog worrying a bone, they're going to keep on chewing on it." He said American journalists haven't "been quite fair" in the Bitburg dispute.

The President was asked about reports published Sunday that some of those SS soldiers buried in the cemetery at Bitburg were members of the Waffen SS Panzer division that massacred 642 men, women and children in the French village of Oradour sur Glane in 1943. Reagan responded:

"I know all the bad things that happened in that war. I was in uniform for four years myself. And again, all of those — you're asking with reference to people who are in the cemetery — were buried there. Well I've said to some of my friends about that, all of those in that cemetery have long since met the supreme judge of right and wrong. And whatever punishment or justice was needed has been rendered by one who is above us all."

"And it isn't going there to honor anyone." Reagan continued. "It's going there simply to, in that surrounding, more visibly bring to the people an

awareness of the great reconciliation that has taken place and as I've said before, too many times I guess, the need to remember in the sense of being pledged to never letting it happen again."

The President also said he did not believe the visit "has affected a majority of people here." He obliquely referred to a survey conducted last week for the Administration by pollster Richard Wirthlin showing public opinion equally divided on whether Reagan should go to Bitburg.

Reagan also said in the interview: "Shouldn't we look at this (visit) and recognize that the unusual thing that has happened, that in these 40 years since the end of the war, the end of the tragedy of the Holocaust, we have become the friends that we are, and use this occasion to make it plain that never again must we find ourselves enemies and never again must there be anything like the Holocaust. And if that is what we can bring out of this trip that has been planned, then I think everything we're doing is very worthwhile."

European Opposition To The Visit

Meanwhile, nearly 100 members of the Liberal, Labor and Social Democratic parties of the British Parliament signed a motion calling the cemetery visit "an offense to the memories of Jews and so many others persecuted and murdered by the Nazis." The motion was sponsored by Laborite member Greville Janner, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and chairman of the World Jewish Congress-European Branch.

Reagan was also asked to cancel the Bitburg visit by the leader of one of Belgium's ruling coalition parties, Gerard Deprez of the Social Christians. "In contrast to the Wehrmacht, the SS were the very symbol of Nazi ideology and institutionalized racism," Deprez said in a letter to Reagan.

In the House of Representatives today, debate continued on a non-binding resolution calling on Reagan to cancel the Bitburg visit. The resolution, expected to be approved overwhelmingly, calls the visit to Bitburg "inappropriate" and asks him to "reconsider." (See separate story.)

Jewish Delegations To Travel To Europe

In addition, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center announced that a delegation of 35 Jewish leaders from the U.S. and Canada will travel to Europe for a series of commemorative events to observe the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany and the liberation of the concentration camps.

On May 5, when Reagan is scheduled to visit the Bitburg cemetery, the delegation will be joined by former resistance fighters and European Jewish leaders at the Luxembourg American Cemetery where a memorial service will be held to honor the American soldiers and others who died while combatting the Nazis.

The delegation will later visit the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp; the site of the Wannsee conference where German officials decided the fate of European Jewry and formalized the implementation of the final solution; and Babi Yar near Kiev to commemorate the massacre of Jews there.

The World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS) announced today that some 500 Jewish students representing

West Germany and 17 other West European countries and Israel will gather outside the Bitburg military cemetery on Sunday. The students group is expected to be the only international Jewish group at Bitburg to protest the visit by Reagan.

Other Developments Taking Place

At the Isaiah Wall, across from the United Nations yesterday, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R. N.Y.) joined Mayor Edward Koch and some 50 officials urging that Reagan cancel his planned Bitburg visit. A text of a telegram sent to Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was read. It asked the two leaders to "please, find another way."

In other developments, a group of New York State legislators will follow Reagan to the gates of the cemetery and will reportedly carry a sign saying: "Mr. President. Please do not desecrate the memory of the victims of the Holocaust." The protest is being organized by Assemblyman Alan Hevesi (D. Forest Hills.).

In Chicago, meanwhile, the Public Affairs Committee of the Jewish United Fund, a coalition of 34 Jewish organizations in the Chicago vicinity, adopted a statement saying, in part, that "as Americans and Jews, we strongly urge and implore President Reagan to cancel his scheduled visit to the Bitburg cemetery."

DEMONSTRATORS AT WHITE HOUSE URGE REAGAN NOT TO VISIT BITBURG CEMETERY

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 30 (JTA) — Only hours before President Reagan was scheduled to leave for West Germany, some 100 persons, including Holocaust survivors and six members of Congress, demonstrated in front of the White House today urging Reagan not to visit the German military cemetery at Bitburg this Sunday.

"The visit to Bitburg is a gesture of reconciliation with the Third Reich and not with today's Federal Republic," declared Rep. Gary Ackerman (D. N.Y.) who organized the rally. "It taints four decades of alliance with Holocaust shadows."

The demonstrators included a busload of people from Ackerman's district in Queens as well as others from New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and the Washington area and a vanload of students from Yeshiva University in New York.

"I came because I feel very strongly that he (Reagan) is not correct in going to Bitburg," Steven Kwstel, a Yeshiva University senior, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. He said Reagan's visit desecrates the memory of the victims of the Holocaust.

The demonstrators carried signs such as "Reconsider Mr. President," "Life is Not Hollywood," and "That Place is Not Your Place." The latter was a quotation from the remarks of Elie Wiesel, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, when he received the Congressional Gold Medal from Reagan at the White House April 19.

The demonstration was threatened with removal several times by the U.S. Park Police, who claimed that it violated the permit which requires constant movement at least three feet from the White House fence and did not allow the participants to speak from a platform directly in front of the fence on Pennsylvania Avenue.

But the police never actually moved in on the peaceful protest. Tourists ignored the demonstrators

as they took pictures of the White House. Menachem Rosenhaft, chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, told the rally, "Today we say to President Reagan, one last time, that if he insists on going to Bitburg we do not want him at Bergen-Belsen."

Reagan scheduled a visit to the former concentration camp site after the uproar over his plan to go to Bitburg where members of the Waffen SS are buried along with other German war dead. But Rosenhaft said today that if the President goes to the German military cemetery "his presence at Bergen-Belsen would violate the sanctity of the mass graves."

Rosenhaft said he would lead a group of survivors and children of survivors in a demonstration outside Bergen-Belsen when the President visits there Sunday "to let him know how deeply and permanently he has offended us. Our demonstration will be peaceful, non-violent and dignified . . ."

American Jewish organizations are planning a protest demonstration Sunday at Arlington National Cemetery instead of Lafayette Park across from the White House where it was originally to have been held. But Ackerman told the JTA that today's demonstration was held as one last chance before Reagan leaves "to bring the President to his senses."

However, Reagan told West European television reporters yesterday that the cemetery visit is "morally right" and "the final word has been spoken as far as I am concerned." He added that "All of those in that cemetery have long since met the supreme judge of right and wrong."

Rosenhaft said today that this "rationale is so offensive as to defy credibility. By the same logic he (Reagan) might just as well lay his wreath at Berchtesgaden. For God's sake, isn't there any limit to this outrage?" Berchtesgaden, in Bavaria, near the Austrian border, was Hitler's home during the period of the Third Reich.

Visit Called A 'Moral Travesty'

Two Holocaust survivors also spoke: Harriet Steinhorn of Washington, D. C., a survivor of Bergen-Belsen, and Norbert Wollheim of New York, a survivor of Auschwitz.

Steinhorn said she had "mixed emotions" because she considers the U.S. a "wonderful country" that enabled the Holocaust survivors to rebuild their lives. But she was "terribly saddened" by the President's decision to go to Bitburg. She said the survivors must see to it that future generations will remember the Holocaust so it can never happen again.

Calling the Bitburg visit a "moral travesty," Wollheim declared that "no political game of reconciliation will find us ready to release Germany from its historical responsibilities for the crimes committed by the SS gangsters in the name of the German people, by a government that had been called to its office in a free election."

Noting that White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan said on Sunday that the President had been "wounded in his heart" by the criticism of his visit, Wollheim declared, "Our hearts are wounded too, not since yesterday but for decades."

Rep. Robert Edgar (D. Pa.) suggested a possible alternative to Bitburg. He said that an alternative could be a visit to the grave of Konrad Adenauer, West Germany's first post-war Chancellor. Edgar said that a ceremony that "recognizes even one individual who participated in the Nazi war crimes denigrates the purpose of the President's trip and works against reconciliation."

Rep. Louis Stokes (D. Ohio) said the President should be "big enough" to recognize the "insensitivity" of his visit to the cemetery. He said it would dishonor "the Americans who died in order to liberate the world from a nation of people who put racial superiority above everything."

Rep. Thomas Anton (D. N.Y.) noted that a World War II veteran in his district asked him recently, "What did the President think we were fighting and dying for?" Edgar stressed that the issue was not one for Jews or veterans but "for all Americans."

Rep. Jim Moody (D. Wisc.) said that by visiting the Bitburg cemetery, Reagan will give an "unwitting boost" to "race hatred and to revisionist historians who would deny the horrors of the Holocaust."

Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D. Conn.) asked the President to display "courage" by not going to the cemetery.

SUDAN'S NEW GOVERNMENT TO OPEN INQUIRY INTO 'THE FALASHA AFFAIR'

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, April 30 (JTA) — Sudan's new military rulers today named a colonel in the now disbanded State Security Department as the man responsible for having permitted the departure by air of thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

The Military Council now ruling Sudan has said it will open an inquiry into "the Falasha affair" and will "severely punish" those responsible for the airlift used by thousands of Jewish refugees.

The Middle East News Agency (MENA) monitored in Paris today in a dispatch from Khartoum named the man deemed responsible for facilitating the flights as Col. El Fateh Mohamed Ahmed Arwa. Basing itself on a report issued by the trade union of the Sudanese Civil Aviation Department, the Egyptian news agency said Arwa granted special privileges to the Brussels-based Trans European Airways.

"The planes were not subjected to civil aviation laws and did not have to produce flight documents," according to the report. Officials belonging to the Civil Aviation Authority or responsible for passport, customs and health formalities were barred from approaching the planes.

The trade union report is the first detailed account of the departure procedure. It says the Ethiopian Jews were taken in the early hours of the morning, between 1 and 3 a.m. when the airport was usually deserted, to the special area of the Khartoum air terminal normally reserved for pilgrims on their way to Saudi Arabia.

The planes which took them to Israel via Greece, Italy and Belgium, landed and took off during this brief time lapse. The report says there were 28 flights in all. Between November 20 and December 22 there was a departure every two days and between December 22 and January 4 the flights took place on a daily basis. The flights were subsequently halted after the airlift was prematurely disclosed.

SHULTZ DEFENDS REAGAN'S VISIT TO GERMAN MILITARY CEMETERY

By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, April 30 (JTA) — Secretary of State George Shultz came out today in a strong defense of President Reagan's planned visit to the West German military cemetery at Bitburg, saying "the more difficult the act of reconciliation the deeper its meaning."

He also suggested that the visit to the site of Nazi graves, including at least 47 belonging to troops from the Waffen SS, will be a gesture of "reconciliation with those Germans who fought for their country in various ways."

In his Worldnet satellite interview with European and Canadian journalists, as well as in a press briefing this morning, the upcoming economic summit in Bonn, which Shultz will also attend and which to be the focus of the two interviews, was almost entirely overshadowed by aggressive questions about the Administration's handling of the controversy.

"I just keep having to bring you back to the importance of reconciliation, to the importance of being prepared to make that reconciliation when it's difficult. And that's what the President is doing," Shultz said.

About four or five times in the course of the two press conferences this morning Shultz stressed that the controversy and anguish surrounding the trip would enhance the significance of reconciliation that is to mark the spirit of the President's stay in West Germany.

Asked why the Administration insisted on visiting a Nazi cemetery rather than the graves of a German who fought the Nazi regime, Shultz maintained that "we're not going to the Nazis."

"Reconciliation does not mean an understanding of the things that took place," Shultz said, referring to Nazi atrocities. But he added, "On the other hand you have people that are part of Germany who fought for their country in various ways, and our object now is to make an expression of reconciliation somehow with them as we celebrate 40 years of peace, as we celebrate the emergence of freedom and democracy and to hail that."

Shultz suggested that those who have criticized Reagan for going ahead with the cemetery stop would, if they gave it more thought, see it as an honorable gesture.

"I think perhaps if people would think about it a little bit, in the end they may wind up admiring the person who stood by his position to carry through on that," Shultz said.

MERTES AND THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

NEW YORK, April 30 (JTA) — The American Jewish Committee said today that Deputy Foreign Minister Alois Mertes of West Germany was invited to speak at its 79th annual meeting here (May 1-5) and was accepted months before the controversy over President Reagan's planned visit to the Bitburg cemetery.

The AJC offered this explanation of the sequence following a statement last week by Mertes that Jews are really not so upset over Reagan's plans. Speaking of signs of "hope and encouragement," he referred to the AJC's invitation which, he noted, came from the organization's president, Howard Friedman. (See April 26 Bulletin.)

NEW YORK (JTA) — The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and Long Island Committee for Soviet Jewry reported Tuesday that Prisoner of Conscience Iosef Begun has been transferred from the Perm labor camp to the notorious Chistopol Prison. His wife Inna was informed that Begun was tried on April 3, evidently within the camp, and sent to Chistopol four days later. A letter from the prison administration gave no other details.

PROMINENT BUSINESSMEN LAUNCH WORLDWIDE INITIATIVE TO HELP DEVELOP ISRAEL'S ECONOMY

NEW YORK, April 30 (JTA) — Max Fisher, the noted Detroit industrialist and founding chairman of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, announced today that "an initiative to develop the Israeli economy has recently been undertaken by a prominent group of businessmen from Israel and throughout the world."

This private enterprise initiative, called "Operation Independence," is "aimed at advancing the economic independence of the Jewish State," Fisher said. He noted that the decision to establish an international task force for this purpose was made at a planning meeting in Jerusalem last February, initiated by Premier Shimon Peres and attended by Israeli and worldwide business leaders.

Fisher's co-chairmen are Morton Mandel of Cleveland and Charles Bronfman of Montreal. Other members of the recently established task force executive committee include: Eli Hurwitz, president of the Israel Manufacturers Association; Dani Rosolio, secretary general of Hevrat Ha'oydim (the economic arm of the Histadrut Labor Federation); Gad Yacobi, Israel's Minister of Economy and Planning, on behalf of the special ministerial committee involved in the launching of Operation Independence; and Moshe Arens, Minister-Without-Portfolio and Israel's former Defense Minister.

Zvi Zur, who served as managing director of Clal Industries, has been appointed chief coordinator; and Jacob Burak, a distinguished Israeli businessman consultant, has been selected as chief operating officer.

Areas Under Consideration

The Operation Independence task force will utilize the experience and professional expertise of task force members and others to further effective economic action in Israel. Areas under consideration include: exports, tourism, joint ventures, direct investments and venture capital. Working groups composed of Israeli and worldwide business leaders will shortly be announced.

The steering committee of Operation Independence met in February in Jerusalem. The executive committee met in New York on April 16 to formulate plans for the task force, including an international task force meeting scheduled for the end of 1985.

In commenting on this new enterprise, Fisher said: "My colleagues and I congratulate the Prime Minister for his initiative in launching this program. We are encouraged by the enthusiasm of those business leaders with whom we have already consulted. We are hopeful that we can meet the challenge of enhancing Israel's economy in the coming decade. We are very pleased that the government of Israel has expressed its vital support and is prepared to serve as facilitator for this essential project."

COALITION OF 34 MAJOR JEWISH GROUPS IN THE CHICAGO AREA DEMAND THAT SOUTH AFRICA END SYSTEM OF APARTHEID

CHICAGO, April 30 (JTA) — A strongly worded resolution deploring apartheid and demanding that the South African government treat all its citizens equally was adopted by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) of the Jewish United Fund of Chicago,

a coalition of 34 major Jewish organizations in the Chicago area. "The use of racial laws to deny basic human dignity to non-white populations (of South Africa) is repugnant to us as Jews and as Americans and is incompatible with our commitment to equality without regard to race, religion or nationality," the resolution stated.

Calling on South Africa to eliminate the apartheid system, the resolution declared: "We deplore the denials of human dignity, the racial discrimination, the harassments and violations of workers' rights, the denationalizations, and the preventive detention laws by which individuals are jailed without charges or trials, which are characteristic of the apartheid system."

The PAC urged President Reagan to "exert firm pressure on the South African government to abandon its official policy of racial discrimination." It also called on the American public to oppose apartheid and discourage investments of American companies in South Africa.

"The PAC calls upon American companies in South Africa to eliminate discrimination in all business practices. The PAC joins in the mounting protest of concerned American citizens against this practice of legal separation on the basis of race and color," the resolution stated.

CANADA'S HOUSE OF COMMONS PAYS TRIBUTE TO VICTIMS OF THE HOLOCAUST

By Michael Solomon

OTTAWA, April 30 (JTA) — The full membership of Canada's House of Commons observed a minute of silence today in tribute to the victims of the Nazi Holocaust.

The observance took place just before the start of the daily question period. Earlier, a half dozen members of Parliament representing the three political parties introduced separate motions urging Canadians never to forget the tragedy of the Holocaust that ended with the defeat of Nazi Germany 40 years ago.

Meanwhile, the three-day gathering of Holocaust survivors and their children held its final session in the main hall of the Canadian Jewish Congress Center here. It was devoted to the younger generation who heard accounts not only of the Holocaust but of the threats today to the Jews of the Soviet Union, of Syria and other Arab countries. The session was chaired by Louis Rasminsky, a former Governor of the Bank of Canada.

The importance of constant vigilance, of positive action to maintain Jewish values and to bring Nazi war criminals still at large to justice was stressed by the speakers — Greta Fischer, a social worker involved in the resettlement of Jewish orphans in Canada; Victor Goldbloom, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews; and McGill University law professor Irwin Cotler.

The Holocaust survivors pledged to remember and to teach their children to keep the world aware of the depths to which humanity can sink, to fight anti-Semitism and to reaffirm their commitment to the State of Israel.

BONN (JTA) — Nominal fines equivalent to \$65 were imposed by a Frankfurt court on each of three members of an outlawed neo-Nazi organization found guilty of circulating anti-Semitic propaganda and displaying symbols of the Nazi regime, including swastikas. Three other neo-Nazis were acquitted. All six were identified as members of the Action Front National Socialists.