

Notes from Andy Baker, 21.8.1997, 19.15

Bergmann was invited to the meeting with Bohl only two weeks ago!!!

Chronology:

December 1996: German government agrees with JCC (Jewish Claims Conference) that 7000 Western survivors will get more compensation, who had already received more than 10,000 marks. Position of the German government at that point was NOT to discuss Eastern Europe or anything else until 1999 and the JCC agreed to this.

January 30, 1997 "Panorama" broadcast showing that war criminals in Germany get pension -- contradicting German government statements up until that point. (see statement by Bohl below... this plays a role.)

Meeting w/Bohl = "We've done all we are going to do"

May 7, 1997 Ad in NY Times -- "Guess Who Gets a Pension from the German Government?" (I have a faxed copy of this and am trying to get a good copy...)

May 7, 1997 -- Position paper by Bohl on NY Times ad -- issued before/simultaneously as the NY Times ad. "the german government points out that in december 1996 it discussed and definitively resolved the remaining unsettled questions concerning german hardship payments with the JCC which was representing many jewish organizations, including the AJC. Agreement was reached that the JCC would not make any further demands on the German government before 1999." Regarding Panorama piece from January 30, "Individual cases have now emerged where 2nd world war veterans of the German armed forces living in germany who committed war crimes received or are still receiving a war victims° pension... in the light of experience and knowledge gained, this view has now changed. for that reason the german government and parliament are currently seeking ways to prevent war criminals from receiving war victims°s pensions."

May 15, 1997 Baker meets with Herzog about E Eur survivors. Herzogs claims he will do something and that he will go and tell the chancellor_s office.

Early June, 1997 Clinton and Kohl meet. Sandy Berger, head of the National Security Council in the White House told Baker that if Clinton did not mention the issue of Eastern European survivors, that he (Berger) would. Berger was also present. Baker has no confirmation that it was actually raised at the meeting as planned, although he believes it was. (Note, the Bonn General Anzeiger first reported this recently.)

June 5, 1997 Baker meets with Schäuble about E European survivors -- S. seems open to changing government position. He thought they could find a pragmatic solution. Said he would discuss it with Waigel.

Scheduling of meeting of August 20th, happens in June, AFTER meeting with Clinton and of course AFTER the ad in the NY Times. At this point, Bergmann is not invited. August 20th scheduling is the big change in the German government position. Here they agree to discuss E Eur survivors on August 20, 1997, something they had always refused.

July 3, JCC executive ctte meeting in Jerusalem. (Note, Baker, WJC and other orgs are all on the board of JCC. No eastern european organizations are on the board of JCC.) Baker argues for Bergman to be included. Later writes this again in a letter. JCC still does not include Bergman.

August 1, 1997 -- letter sent by the 82 Senators to Kohl. (there would have been more, but many senators were away on vacation -- summer break). Letter was then published in the newspaper a week before the August 20 meeting.

Bergman invited to meeting AFTER letter to Kohl, ca. 2 weeks before the meeting.

Guess Which One Receives a War Victims Pension from the German Government.



Survivor of a Nazi Ghetto in Eastern Europe



Veteran of the Latvian Legionnaires
and the Waffen-SS

If you guessed the survivor, you're wrong, sad to say. While Holocaust survivors in other parts of the world are eligible to receive German pensions, Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union have never received a pension of any kind from Bonn. Inexplicably, the German government has simply drawn the line at providing such direct assistance to this group of survivors.

Not so, however, for many of the survivors' former tormentors. Believe it or not, the German government provides generous monthly pensions to Nazi war veterans, whose injuries or even mild, chronic ailments qualify them for "war victims pensions."

In the U.S. alone, there are \$377 pensions sent each month to veterans

of the armies of the Third Reich or their dependents!

After the fall of communism, many Waffen-SS veterans in the Baltic states and elsewhere in Eastern Europe discovered they, too, were eligible and are now receiving such pensions from Germany, while their victims are not.

Today, an estimated 15,000-20,000 Jewish survivors of ghettos and concentration camps live in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. They are old, many are in poor health and financially destitute. Surely, they deserve some help and so forth in the last years of their lives.

Join our call to the German government to correct this grievous wrong. Bring justice to the real victims of the Holocaust. Contact us to see how you can help.



The American Jewish Committee

Robert S. Sanford
President

David A. Harris
Chairman Emeritus

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Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe deserve pensions from the German Government. The U.S. Senate agrees.

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 1, 1997

His Excellency Helmut Kohl
Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany
Bonn Federal Republic of Germany
Dear Chancellor Kohl:

We, the undersigned members of the United States Senate, are writing to express our deep concern about the continued refusal of German Government to pay pensions to the thousands of elderly Holocaust survivors living in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, even as generous "war victims pensions" are paid to veterans of the Waffen-SS and other Nazi military organizations living in these same countries and elsewhere.

Unlike their counterparts in the West, Jewish Holocaust survivors living in the formerly Communist nations -- survivors of ghettos and concentration camps -- receive no pensions. Some are entitled to a one-time payment of a few hundred dollars; others do not receive even that.

In stark contrast, many thousands of veterans of various Nazi military forces, who are living all around the world, are eligible for supplemental pensions. Your Government recently confirmed that over 3,000 veterans of Nazi military forces or their dependents currently living in the United States are receiving such pensions. German law even permits Nazi war criminals inside of Germany to receive these benefits.

Konrad Adenauer, the first Chancellor of the post-war Federal Republic, acknowledged that Germany would be judged by how it treated the Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. We fully recognize that Germany has contributed billions of dollars in compensation and restitution these past fifty years, and it has, in so many ways and unlike so many of its neighbors, confronted its past squarely and honestly.

Yet it is precisely because of this admirable record, and the fact that Germany is now such a valued friend and trusted ally of the United States, that we find it distressing that your Government has refused to provide any meaningful compensation to this forgotten group of Holocaust survivors.

We hope you will address this matter with the most speed so that these remaining survivors of mankind's darkest hours are able to live out their final years with some measure of comfort and dignity.

Sincerely,

Senator Charles J. Dodd
Connecticut
Senator Tom Daschle
South Dakota

Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Texas
Senator Tim Wirth
Colorado

Senator Spencer Abraham
Michigan
Senator Daniel Akaka
Hawaii
Senator Wayne Allard
Colorado
Senator John Ashcroft
Missouri
Senator Mike Bicker
Montana
Senator Joseph B. Blyden
Alabama
Senator Jeff Bingaman
New Mexico
Senator Christopher Bond
Missouri
Senator Barbara Boxer
California
Senator John Breaux
Colorado
Senator Sam Brownback
Kansas
Senator Richard Bryan
Nevada
Senator Conrad Burns
Montana

Senator Max Baucus
Montana
Senator Dan Claitor
Indiana
Senator James Cochran
Mississippi
Senator Kent Conrad
North Dakota
Senator Paul Cornwell
Georgia
Senator Larry Craig
Idaho
Senator Al Franken
New York
Senator Mike DeWine
Ohio
Senator Pat Roberts
Kansas
Senator Byron Dorgan
North Dakota
Senator Edward Durbin
Rhode Island
Senator Mike Enzi
Wyoming
Senator Patrick Leahy
New Hampshire

Senator Bill Bradley
New Jersey
Senator Thomas Daschle
Kansas
Senator Wendell Ford
Kentucky
Senator Bill Frist
Tennessee
Senator John Chafee
Rhode Island
Senator J. Michael Smith
Florida
Senator Phil Gramm
Texas
Senator Charles Grassley
Iowa
Senator Tim Wirth
Colorado
Senator Orrin Hatch
Utah
Senator Ernest Hollings
South Carolina
Senator Tom Harkin
Iowa
Senator James Inhofe
Oklahoma

Senator Daniel Patrick
Moynihan
Senator Judd Gregg
New Hampshire
Senator Tim Wirth
Colorado
Senator Orrin Hatch
Utah
Senator Edward Kennedy
Massachusetts
Senator Robert Kerry
Indiana
Senator John Kerry
Massachusetts
Senator Frank Lautenberg
New Jersey
Senator Jon Kyl
Arizona
Senator Mary Landrieu
Louisiana
Senator Fred Lautenberg
New Jersey
Senator Patrick Leahy
Vermont
Senator Carl Levin
Michigan

Senator Joseph Lieberman
Connecticut
Senator Coakle Mack
Florida
Senator John McClellan
Oregon
Senator Mitch McConnell
Kentucky
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Maryland
Senator Carol Moseley-Braun
Illinois
Senator Daniel M. Boren
Washington
Senator Frank Lautenberg
New Jersey
Senator J. Robert Murray
Washington
Senator Dan Nickerl
Oklahoma
Senator Jack Reed
Rhode Island
Senator Harry Reid
Nevada
Senator Charles Robb
Virginia

Senator Jay Byrd
West Virginia
Senator Rick Santorum
Pennsylvania
Senator Paul Sarbanes
Maryland
Senator J. Bennett Johnston
Louisiana
Senator Bob Smith
New Hampshire
Senator Gordon Smith
Oregon
Senator Olympia Snowe
Maine
Senator Arlen Specter
Pennsylvania
Senator Craig Thomas
Wyoming
Senator Robert Tortorella
New Jersey
Senator John Warner
Virginia
Senator Paul W. Roberts
Idaho
Senator Tim Wirth
Colorado

The American Jewish Committee has long urged the German Government to provide pensions to Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe. We applaud the 82 United States Senators, led by Senators Dodd and Hutchison, who have added their voices to this humanitarian appeal.

The American Jewish Committee

Robert S. Rifkind
President

David A. Harris
Executive Director

For further information, please contact us at 165 East 56th Street, New York, New York 10022
Visit our web site at www.ajc.org

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An seine Excellenz Dr. Helmut Kohl
Bundeskanzler der Bundesrepublik Deutschland
Bonn, Bundesrepublik Deutschland

1. August 1997

Sehr geehrter Herr Bundeskanzler,

hiermit moechten wir, die unterzeichneten Abgeordneten des US-Senats, unsere Sorge ueber die Tatsache zum Ausdruck bringen, dass bis heute von Seiten der Bundesregierung Rentenzahlungen an aeltere Ueberlebende des Holocaust, die in Osteuropa und in den Staaten der ehemaligen Sowjetunion leben, ausgeblieben sind, waehrend grosszuegige "Kriegsopferrenten" an Veteranen der Waffen-SS und anderer nationalsozialistischer Militaerorganisationen, die in diesen oder anderen Laendern ansaessig sind, gezahlt werden.

Im Gegensatz zu ihren Leidensgenossen im Westen erhalten juedische Ueberlebende des Holocaust (Ueberlebende von Ghettos und Konzentrationslagern), die in den ehemaligen kommunistischen Staaten leben, keinerlei Rentenzahlungen. Einige erhalten eine einmalige Zahlung in Hoehe von einigen hundert Dollar, andere wiederum bekommen garnichts.

In grossem Widerspruch dazu stehen die in aller Welt lebenden tausenden von Veteranen verschiedenster nationalsozialistischer Militaereinrichtungen, die zusaetzliche Rentenzahlungen erhalten. Ihre Regierung hat vor kurzem bestaetigt, dass mehr als 3.000 in den USA lebende Veteranen nationalsozialistischer Militaerorganisationen oder deren Angehoerige derartige Rentenzahlungen erhalten. Das deutsche Recht duldet sogar die Zahlung derartiger Leistungen an nationalsozialistische Kriegsverbrecher in Deutschland.

Konrad Adenauer, der erste Nachkriegskanzler der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, hatte erkannt, dass Deutschland nach seinem Umgang mit den juedischen Ueberlebenden des Holocaust beurteilt werden wird. Selbstverstaendlich wissen wir, dass Deutschland in den letzten 50 Jahren Entschaedigungs- and Reparationszahlungen in Milliardenhoehe geleistet hat und sich, im Gegensatz zu den meisten seiner Nachbarn, in vielerlei Hinsicht mit der Vergangenheit ehrlich und offen auseinandergesetzt hat.

Eben wegen dieser bewundernswerten Leistungen und der Tatsache, dass die Bundesrepublik heute ein geschaezter Freund und zuverlaessiger Partner der Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika ist, finden wir es besorgniserregend, dass Ihre Regierung es bis heute ablehnt, nennenswerte Entschaedigungsleistungen an diese letzte, vergessene Gruppe Ueberlebender des Holocaust zu entrichten.

Wir hoffen, dass Sie diese Angelegenheit so schnell wie moeglich zur Sprache bringen, damit die letzten Ueberlebenden des dunkelsten Kapitels der Menschheitsgeschichte in der Lage sind, ihre verbleibenden Jahre in Muehelosigkeit und Wuerde zu verleben.

Hochachtungsvoll,