

Commemorating The 50th Anniversary of Kristallnacht

By Helmut Kohl

Mr. Kohl is Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. This article was prepared by him for the November issue of DIMENSIONS, published by the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

This year we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the pogroms which took place on November 9, 1938 — that terrible milestone on the road to the genocide perpetrated on the European Jews in the name of the Germans. We Germans are filled with shame by the events of that day. We mourn the victims.

Hundreds of synagogues were burned down or destroyed in one single night. Thirty thousand German Jews were arrested, thousands of them were cruelly maltreated, many were murdered. Countless German Jews were forced to look as their homes and businesses were destroyed.

On November 9, 1938, the campaign of terror against the Jews in Germany took on a new dimension. The so-called "Reichskristallnacht" was a forewarning of the deliberate, systematic, and merciless persecution of the Jews to come. The events of that night made plain once and for all how hopeless the position of German Jews in the Third Reich had become.

However, at that time only very few people sensed that National Socialist racism would soon wreak even greater havoc. It was completely unimaginable that the terror witnessed on November 9th was only a harbinger of the genocide to come.

The Holocaust itself was perpetrated in secret in

the remoteness of the death camps. But the crime committed on November 9th happened in public for all to see; it was committed against friends and neighbors. At that time most Germans chose to remain silent, either because they were paralyzed by fear and lacked the strength to resist when resistance was called for, or because they were indifferent. This silence makes us feel deeply ashamed right up to the present day.

We Germans will neither forget, nor dismiss from our minds, nor play down the darkest chapter in our history. The unspeakable suffering inflicted in the name of the Germans and by German hands in those years, primarily on the Jews, is ever-present in our memory. We know that the Holocaust is without parallel in the history of mankind, in its cold-blooded, inhuman planning and its deadly effectiveness.

For this very reason the message of this genocide will not be lost. It is an appeal to all of us to remain untiringly alert, above all to the dangers which may pave the way for totalitarian rule. We must guard against cynical ideologies, and against indifference to any violation of human rights and human dignity. Our policy must be a policy for peace. Our political and social action must be measured in terms of the values of a free democracy.

These basic values have their roots in biblical teachings according to which every human being is created in God's image — a lesson that the Jews have upheld despite defamation and persecution over thousands of years. From this lesson we can derive hope for a better future.

Unity committed to liberty, human dignity and the rule of law had the strength to shoulder their responsibility in history. They prepared the ground in our country on which justice, freedom and peace can thrive. They, and we, have taken the

lessons of history to heart.

One of our most moving historical experiences is that German Jews, who lost their homeland during the terrible Nazi persecution, returned to our country and participated in the reconstruction of a democratic state based on the rule of law. The greatness they displayed in fostering understanding and reconciliation played a considerable part in restoring respect and recognition throughout the world to the German name, which is linked irrefutably to the memory of a terrible injustice. We are deeply grateful to them for helping to dispel distrust and to win support for the young German democracy.

Of invaluable and unforgettable assistance to the newly created German democracy was the generous aid and, eventually, the friendship of the United States. The American people were prepared to reach out the hand of reconciliation. We are ever thankful for this.

An expression of the change that has taken place is also the solidarity that we feel with the State of Israel. It is based on the experiences of the past of our two peoples and will determine our policy in the future. Differences of opinion in everyday politics will not call this into question.

Change presupposes that we pass on what we learned from our past to future generations. We owe this to the victims whose suffering must never be forgotten. Therefore, we in the Federal Republic of Germany are making every effort to ensure that in our schools and universities, and in developing a sense of citizenship, our young citizens are informed about the calamitous past and come to realize their duty to treat our history in a responsible manner.

It is not by forgetting but by remembering the past that we can muster the courage to resist the forces of evil in history and together pave the way to a better future.

Simon Wiesenthal Center To Pay Tribute To Famous Nazi Hunter

The Simon Wiesenthal Center will honor the 80th birthday of its famed namesake at its Sixth Annual Eastern Regional Dinner in New York City on Monday, November 14th.

The black-tie dinner will also pay tribute to Simon Wiesenthal's lifetime achievement of uncovering the crimes of the Nazis against humanity and pursuing Nazi war criminals.

This historic occasion will be highlighted by the presence of many illustrious guests. The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Helmut Kohl, is making a special trip to deliver the keynote address, including tributary remarks to Wiesenthal.

Ambassador Ronald S. Lauder, former U.S. Ambassador to Austria, will serve as Dinner Chairman. During his tenure as Ambassador, Lauder forged strong diplomatic bonds between the United States and Austria, while personally repudiating Austria president Kurt Waldheim and warning the

world of the rising tide of anti-semitism in Austria.

Lesley Stahl, national affairs correspondent for "CBS Evening News with Dan Rather" and moderator of "Face the Nation," will be Mistress of Ceremonies.

Samuel Belzberg, chairman, First City Capital and chairman of the Center's Board of Trustees is co-chairing this dinner.

Among the Vice Chairmen are: Edward S. Finkelstein, chairman and CEO R.H. Macy & Co., Inc.; Nelson Peltz, chairman and CEO, Triangle Industries and Sheldon H. Solow, president, Solow Building Company.

The dinner will be held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. The Meyer Davis Orchestra will provide the music and Newman & Leventhal will cater the dinner. Tickets are from \$500.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center is the largest organization dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and is supported by 370,000 member families. The Center is headquartered in Los Angeles, with offices in New York, Chicago, Toronto, Miami, Jerusalem, and Paris, and is represented by legal counsel in Washington, D.C.

The Center's educational materials are used throughout the world, and its media department has produced the Academy Award-winning documentary, "Genocide."

For further information, about the Sixth Annual Eastern Regional Dinner please contact the Simon Wiesenthal Center at (212) 370-0320.



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