

German Compensation

For some time, the AJC has been privately urging the German government to compensate the thousands of elderly Holocaust survivors living in Eastern Europe and the former USSR, many of them destitute, who have never received pensions.

At the annual meeting, AJC launched a public campaign to focus the world's attention on this injustice. An ad in the *New York Times* (May 7) dramatically contrasted the inexplicable treatment of these Jewish survivors with the regular pension payments that Germany provides wounded war veterans of the Third Reich, including members of the Waffen-SS. That same day, AJC organized a press conference at the Capitol.

Then, at the annual dinner, the AJC underlined the importance of this issue by presenting a special citation to Winfried Nachtwei, a member of the German Bundestag, who has set up a special fund for German Jews who spent the Holocaust years in the Riga Ghetto and have not been compensated by the German government.

AJC's campaign has succeeded in evoking public awareness of the stark inequity of the situation. For example, a major story in the *Times* three days after the ad and the press conference dealt with the reaction of the German government, which, while admitting that some war criminals might be receiving pensions, insisted that Germany could not provide any more financial help for Holocaust survivors.

But the AJC will not allow the matter to drop. In the aftermath of the

annual meeting, we have had ongoing contact with German officials—including a private meeting with German president Roman Herzog—as well as U.S. administration and congressional leaders, in the hope of reversing Germany's stand. And we are also gearing up for further public actions, should that be necessary.