

Germany and Compensation

AJC's campaign to convince Germany to pay compensation to Holocaust survivors who live in the formerly communist countries is picking up steam. After two years of extensive private discussions with German officials accomplished nothing, AJC ran a prominent ad in the *New York Times* contrasting the pensions being paid to former Waffen-SS officers, some of whom were war criminals, on the one hand, and, on the other, the insensitive treatment meted out to Jewish survivors who were not eligible to file claims because they lived behind the Iron Curtain.

In June, the AJC encouraged a Senate letter to German Chancellor Kohl urging payments to these Holocaust survivors as quickly as possible, so that they "are able to live out their final years with some measure of comfort and dignity." While acknowledging that Germany has paid billions of dollars to Holocaust survivors in the West, it stressed the sad plight of those in the East who have gotten little or nothing. Sponsored by Sens. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), the letter was signed by 82 members of the Senate and printed as an ad in several major newspapers.

The German government has not yet acted favorably on the AJC initiative, and the Chancellor's office in fact responded by defending Germany's record on restitution. Nevertheless the upper house of Germany's parliament recently passed a bill that would end pensions to German veterans guilty of war crimes, and the German media are giving considerable attention to the Senate letter.