

Bitburg trip strengthens ties despite anti-German uproar

by Vin Berg

Despite the most massive black-propaganda/psychological-warfare campaign to date in the Soviet Union's drive to split West Germany from the United States and topple the Bonn government of Helmut Kohl, the outcome of President Reagan's current trip to Germany to commemorate the defeat of Nazism, as of this writing, is a strengthening of German-American relations and of the Western alliance.

To this degree, President Reagan's show of stubborn determination in going ahead with his visit to the Bitburg Cemetery, where several dozen German war-dead are buried; his defiance of Soviet charges that this represented "softness on Nazism," an insult to Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, ad nauseum; his description of the Kremlin's ventriloquist dummies at the New York Times, Washington Post, Newsweek, and in the U.S. Congress, as exhibiting the moral quality of "dogs" in their shrill repetition of the Soviet propaganda, has caused the entire Bitburg "scandal" to backfire.

West Germany is the key to the alliance, the President told Chancellor Kohl upon arrival in Bonn the morning of May 2, and the concrete substance of alliance relations now is cooperation around America's beam-weapon development program, the Strategic Defense Initiative. The Bitburg visit, far from honoring Nazis, is symbolic of a reconciliation between sovereign nations, to both of whom Nazism was a deadly threat.

Reagan was explicit in his rejection of the British and Soviet-sponsored distortion of history that pins "collective guilt" on the German people. May 1945 was a new beginning for German democracy, Reagan told Kohl. As the Chancellor's spokesman, Peter Böhnisch, informed the press, Reagan expressed his anger at the current controversy over Bitburg and May 8's VE-Day celebrations. Already, at the Nuremberg Tribunal of 1946-47, Americans had turned away

from the thesis that Germans were to be treated as "collectively guilty" for the crimes of Hitler, said the President, assuring the German people that the American people consider today's Germany a reliable and democratic ally.

Kohl, for his part, had informed a *Time* magazine interviewer a few days earlier, "I consider the most important task I have is to contribute toward making the ties between the Federal Republic and the Western community irreversible, and part of our basic political philosophy. . . . When the President is in Bitburg, he will encounter a wave of sympathy such as he has rarely experienced in his life. . . . My objective was reconciliation over the graves of the past. . . . I said we wanted to commemorate the days as one of remembrance, and far from denying the horrible acts of Nazism, to do everything to see that they may never occur again. . . . American freedom, not just German freedom, is now being defended in this country. . . ."

"With reference to the SDI, I strongly support the idea," Kohl continued. "In this, I would like to insist on two basic conditions: that it should not be a one-way street, and that what we do together should be for our common benefit. The research carried out will not only be of military value; three-fourths of the research will have civilian applications. We [Germany] can add a lot to this effort, in sophisticated optics, for example. I would like other Europeans to cooperate with us in this effort, like the French, British, and Italians."

Thus, rather than shake the determination of the heads-of-state to maintain the alliance of their nations, and to base that alliance on the military and economic promise of SDI technology, the best efforts of the Kremlin, the U.S. Congress, and the Western news media to use Bitburg to "decouple" Germany from America has had the opposite effect, at least temporarily.

A Soviet operation

The Soviets are rejoicing at the struggle between Germans and Americans over Bitburg, wrote editor Fritz Ulrich Fack in his April 29 lead editorial for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. He warned Americans taking part in the campaign that they are contributing to an anti-Americanism which may turn into "hateful aversion [to Americans] tomorrow." The beneficiaries "would be the Soviets, who can already congratulate themselves today for having propagated with force the otherwise unusual idea of a 40th anniversary of a victory. Maybe not even in their boldest dreams had the Soviets imagined themselves succeeding in driving such a massive psychological wedge between two of the main allies on the Western side."

Alois Mertes, a prominent parliamentarian and foreign-policy spokesman for Kohl's Christian Democratic party, went a step farther, charging that the Kremlin was directly behind the orchestration of the scandal-mongering over the Bitburg visit. In an interview carried on a national Deutschlandfunk wire April 29, Mertes called the American side of the Bitburg controversy "an aberration of the human mind." Both houses of the U. S. Congress passed resolutions opposing the Reagan visit, on grounds that it somehow insulted Jewish victims of the SS. This, said Mertes, "has nothing to do with the Jewish or Christian creed. It is, as I believe, rather an evil assault on the very basis of our civilization. We are an ally of the United States. In some of its formulations, the U.S. Congress treats us in a way which we have to firmly reject."

In fact, the Soviet Union had long-since made clear that it would stop at nothing to halt work on the Strategic Defense Initiative, and in this connection, Chancellor Kohl had established himself as the leading supporter of the President's program in Europe. Kohl's strong endorsement of the SDI, in the presence of high-level Soviet guests, in an end-of-April address at the Budestag, added urgency to the Kremlin's strategic objective of bringing West Germany into the Soviet sphere-of-influence. Kohl was to be toppled—and had Reagan canceled his Bitburg visit or otherwise retreated in the face of the pressure, he would have been. The scandal-mongering around Bitburg began almost as soon as Kohl had exited the podium in the Budestag.

The Kremlin's 'dogs' in the West

The April 29 edition of *Newsweek* magazine published an admittedly fabricated picture of freshly planted German flags at an SS soldier's Bitburg grave—on the cover of its American edition. (It did not dare publish the same picture—the photographer had planted the flags himself—in its edition for European readers, who wouldn't have swallowed it.) The incident is typical of the Western news-media's black propaganda on behalf of Soviet objectives in the Bitburg affair: portraying Germans as unregenerate Nazis to Americans, and therefore, Americans as lying accusers and unreliable allies to Germans.

And, as in the case of the press, wherever one found an American opponent of the Strategic Defense Initiative, one also heard shrill shouts against the President's German visit. That means, above all, in the U. S. Congress, where the most effective lobbyists—not to say, legislative whips—are Anatolii Dobrynin's Soviet embassy staff.

As Mertes put it in understatement, the halls of Congress were filled by a chorus of treason. Arlen Specter, Republican of Pennsylvania, was exemplary on the Senate side. Specter did not hesitate to indicate in his remarks on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation" program April 28 that the Bitburg issue was to be used to downgrade U.S.-German relations. Specter, co-sponsor of a Senate resolution calling on Reagan to cancel his visit to Bitburg, said, "There's a growing feeling we are spending too much money on NATO already." Reagan "doesn't understand how [politically] serious" the Bitburg affair has become, and could get out of the visit if "Kohl let him off the hook." Top White House officials claim, said Specter, that the West German government had told the administration that no Waffen SS were buried at Bitburg. Reagan could withdraw on the grounds that he had been misinformed by the Kohl government.

Senator Alan Cranston of California, one of the 80 Senators who voted for the voice-resolution demanding Reagan cancel the visit, declared: "The message is to the head of West Germany, Chancellor Kohl. The message should be very, very clear now, that if we do not get that cooperation, unfortunate damage will be done to the relations of our two countries. . . . Are Germany's ties to the U.S. and the West so weak, so tenuous, so insecure and uncertain that Germany's price for reassurance is the humiliation of our President. Chancellor Kohl! Free President Reagan! Let our President go!"

Cranston, it should be noted, earlier in his career, translated Hitler's *Mein Kampf* into English. That this was no academic exercise, but an expression of his political sympathies, is evident in that, during the same 1930s period, he was a firm supporter of Mussolini. His frequently expressed support for the racist Global 2000 depopulation doctrine of the Carter administration, is indication that little has changed.

Following Cranston, the Senator from Chappaquiddick, Ted Kennedy, another backer of Global 2000, solemnly intoned the names of all the Nazi-era concentration camps, one by one.

Appropriate reflection on the lies underlying the whole anti-Alliance campaign was provided to *EIR* by a World War II veteran of General George Patton's Third Army, 4th Armored Division, which crushed the SS Panzer division at Bitburg. He was in complete support of the President's trip, reporting that many of the SS soldiers whom he fought were as young as 14-years-old, and wanted to surrender immediately. He and his buddies simply sent these kids back to their families upon capture.

Such are the "Nazis" buried at Bitburg.

Bitburg campaign only benefits Moscow

Dr. Alois Mertes is Minister of State in the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany. These are excerpts from his speech before the 79th annual meeting of the American Jewish Committee in New York City on May 2. Text abridged.

When you invited me, neither you nor I ever dreamt that a cemetery near the center of my electoral district would become the subject of strong emotions and intense discussion in the United States and in Europe. I cannot and will not remain silent on the historical and moral background of these emotions, discussions, and misunderstandings.

We Germans will never forget the most infamous moment of German history. Hitler misused our own people, in particular the loyalty of German soldiers towards their country. Life in a totalitarian dictatorship which my generation experienced caused us in 1945 to swear: Never again dictatorship on German soil and never again war from German soil!

We do not want to forget the villainy of the National-Socialist dictatorship. This is especially true of the genocide of the Jews, which was obviously beyond the rationale of war, victory or defeat. It constituted in itself an exclusively criminal proclivity for annihilation. This genocide cannot be compared with any other event between 1942 and 1945. This I state as someone who served his country in good faith at the time, and who rejects any collective accusations against Germany, since they would correspond neither to historical reality nor to Biblical ethics. But we Germans must also recall all the great things our people have given humanity.

Now let me turn to the situation of Europe 40 years after the war. The Soviet Union exploited its military victory over Germany in order to create by force a buffer zone in Eastern Europe and its occupation zone in Germany, from 1945 to 1948, which led to the division of Europe.

Trying to drive a wedge between Germans and Americans is the logical consequence of Soviet foreign policy. Any division between the American people and Germany or between the German people and America serves, as a result, only Moscow's interests. I cannot conceive of how such a division could possibly benefit the United States or Europe. On the contrary, such a division places us all in danger. I am afraid that the Bitburg controversy has *ipso facto* only raised

Moscow's chances of influencing young people psychologically. I regard it as our duty, in public discussion on the past, not to forget the needs of the present and the future vital interests of Europe and America.

We have noticed too that the Soviets have adopted a varied feature of the Soviet Union's policy towards the Western Alliance. Even now Moscow is trying to exert political pressure on European countries whom it accuses today of giving unqualified support to the American Strategic Defense Initiative.

Leaders of the German wartime Resistance group Reichsbanner Schwarz-Rot-Gold sent the letter excerpted here to President Reagan on April 28.

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned, since the beginning of the 1930s, have been members of the democratic militant organization *Reichsbanner*, which defended the young Weimar Republic against its enemies—fascist and communist alike. Many members of *Reichsbanner* were leading figures in the German resistance and died at the hands of the Nazi regime.

We feel that the hysteria, that has been whipped up over your planned visit to the military cemetery at Bitburg, is intolerable. The quality of historical "fact-finding" being conducted here is only equaled by the Soviet version which blames the Germans for the mass murder at Katyn. The hypocritical campaign over the graves of a few soldiers of the Waffen-SS in the Bitburg Cemetery only serves the interests of those who want to seriously injure German-American friendship, and the Western Alliance in general.

The former chairman of the postwar Social Democratic Party and *Reichsbanner*-leader, Kurt Schumacher, himself for nearly 12 years a concentration camp prisoner under the Nazis, and one who tirelessly warned against totalitarian regimes of both fascist and communist coloration, had already pointed out in 1951, that hundreds of thousands of soldiers of the Waffen-SS had been drafted or ordered off to deployment at the front. It was therefore in many cases not a question of volunteers.

The present propaganda campaign has nothing to do with historical reality—these distortions are as thoroughly reprehensible, as the insolence of the Communists, Greens, and terrorist-sympathizers, who dare to slander the American President as a "new Hitler" and arrogate to themselves the "right to resistance" against our Federal Republic.

We, as members of the organization of the German Resistance, welcome your visit most cordially. We are ready, at any time, to accompany you on your visit to the Bitburg Cemetery. A cancellation of this visit would be a triumph for the opponents of the Western Alliance.

Signed—Robert Becker, Helmut Esser, Franz Hron, also in the name of many comrades.