



Bitburg ceremony sparks mixed reactions

Protests, cheers greet Reagan's group

BITBURG, West Germany (AP) — President Ronald Reagan's visit to the military cemetery inspired jeers, chants and whistles of opposition here and around the world Sunday. But cheers were heard too, as many Germans thanked Reagan for defying a storm of criticism to honor their war dead.

A handful of protesters shouted "Please don't go" as Reagan's motorcade carried him through the narrow streets of this small farming community to the graveyard in the nearby hills.

A grim-faced Reagan and West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl laid wreaths at Kolmeschohe Cemetery, where 49 Nazi SS troopers are buried

among some 2,000 war dead.

Several thousand people lined the streets to see the president's limousine motorcade speed by. Protesters' chants were matched at times by cheers from supporters. Posters and banners were held aloft amid the throngs.

About 20 minutes before Reagan passed through the center of Bitburg, riot gear-equipped German police scuffled briefly with about 200 Jewish students and their supporters. No arrests were reported.

Demonstrators also greeted Reagan and Kohl at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp about 220 miles to the north.

After the two leaders left the death camp, about 50 people, most of them American Jews who are the children of Holocaust survivors, were allowed onto the grounds to conduct their own memorial service.

Wiesel, Wiesenthal give Reagan trip perspective

(AP) — Jewish leaders dismissed President Ronald Reagan's visit to Bitburg cemetery as a misguided "political gesture" Sunday, but Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel said the trip might prove beneficial if it brings alive the lessons of Nazi persecution for a generation too young to remember.

Wiesel, chairman of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, said the world's awareness of Nazi crimes against millions of Jews and other people was heightened by Reagan's much-criticized decision to lay a wreath with Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the German military cemetery where 49 Nazi SS troopers are buried.

Interviewed by NBC-TV, Wiesel said the public, the news media and Congress "all found that an injustice had been committed and they worked hard to correct it."

Simon Wiesenthal, another Holocaust survivor and famed Nazi hunter, said Reagan's late addition of a visit to the site of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp did "absolutely not" offset his appearance at Bitburg.

As for the two leaders' goal of dramatizing U.S.-West German reconciliation, Wiesenthal said: "They absolutely don't need it. . . . Sixty percent of the German population was born after the war."

"Ninety percent of the young Germans are pro-American. They knew their fathers and grandfathers are guilty. They are ashamed for this."

Wiesenthal, interviewed on CBS-TV's "Face the Nation," said his work of tracking down Nazi fugitives is "a warning for the murderers of tomorrow. It can happen again, even after this Holocaust."

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