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Years of AJC prodding have finally convinced Germany to provide compensation to Holocaust survivors living in the countries of the former Soviet bloc. *The Washington Post*, in an editorial on the subject, noted that the German government had “stalled for half a decade,” and “only when the American Jewish Committee went public with its tenacious campaign” was there progress.

Germany to Compensate Double Victims

AJC discovered that many aged and indigent East European survivors were getting no money from Germany, even though they had gone through the same wartime experiences as survivors in Western countries.

AJC's involvement in this issue goes back to the breakup of the Soviet bloc, when AJC discovered that many aged and indigent survivors in these countries were getting no money from Germany, even though they had gone through the same wartime experiences as survivors in Western countries. Germany had refused to negotiate with the communist regimes about compensation, and after the Soviet collapse the Germans came up with new rationales to withhold payment.

Beginning in 1995, AJC used the opportunity of its frequent and regular meetings with top German officials—the president, the chancellor, the foreign minister, Bundestag members—to raise this issue. When we saw that quiet diplomacy was not working, we went public. In 1997 AJC hosted a press conference on Capitol Hill featuring German parliamentarians, U.S. congressmen, and the venerable Jan Karski, the Polish diplomat during World War II who tried to warn the world about the Holocaust. We also placed an ad in *The New York Times* contrasting German treatment of the survivors to the pensions Germany was giving to veterans of the Nazi Waffen-SS.

After convincing President Clinton to raise this matter directly with Chancellor Kohl, AJC suggested a Senate letter urging pensions for the survivors. Sponsored by Senators Dodd (D-CT) and Hutchison (R-TX), the letter, addressed to the chancellor, was signed by 82 Senators, and was featured in another AJC ad in *The New York Times*.

Only then did Germany demonstrate a willingness to negotiate the issue with the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, the international Jewish body set up after World War II to deal with compensation and indemnification. AJC was a founding member of the Claims Conference. These talks resulted in a German pledge to provide 200 million marks (120 million dollars), sufficient for monthly pensions to an estimated 20,000 survivors who had spent at least six months in a concentration camp, or 18 months in a ghetto or in hiding.

AJC Executive Director David A. Harris, I., and President Robert S. Rifkind, r., confer with Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel of Germany.

