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Bitburg

on

Josh 7

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

TO:

Central F.

FROM: NANCE ROBERTS

This is ready
to be refiled!

Thanks.

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary
(Bitburg Air Base, Federal Republic of Germany)

For Immediate Release

May 5, 1985

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT BITBURG AIR BASE

Federal Republic of Germany

3:33 P.M. (L)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you very much. I have just come from the cemetery where German war dead lay at rest. No one could visit there without deep and conflicting emotions. I felt great sadness that history could be filled with such waste, destruction and evil. But my heart was also lifted by the knowledge that from the ashes has come hope and that from the terrors of the past we have built 40 years of peace, freedom, and reconciliation among our nations.

This visit has stirred many emotions in the American and German people, too. I've received many letters since first deciding to come to Bitburg cemetery; some supportive, others deeply concerned and questioning, and others opposed. Some old wounds have been reopened, and this I regret very much because this should be a time of healing.

To the veterans and families of American servicemen who still carry the scars and feel the painful losses of that war, our gesture of reconciliation with the German people today in no way minimizes our love and honor for those who fought and died for our country. They gave their lives to rescue freedom in its darkest hour. The alliance of democratic nations that guards the freedom of millions in Europe and America today stands as living testimony that their noble sacrifice was not in vain.

No, their sacrifice was not in vain. I have to tell you that nothing will ever fill me with greater hope than the sight of two former war heroes who met today at the Bitburg ceremony; each among the bravest of the brave; each an enemy of the other 40 years ago; each a witness to the horrors of war. But today, they came together, American and German, General Matthew B. Ridgway and General Johanner Steinhoff reconciled and united for freedom. They reached over the graves to one another like brothers and grasped their hands in peace.

To the survivors of the Holocaust: your terrible suffering has made you ever vigilant against evil. Many of you are worried that reconciliation means forgetting. Well, I promise you, we will never forget. I have just come this morning from Bergen-Belsen where the horror of that terrible crime, the Holocaust, was forever burned upon my memory. No, we will never forget, and we say with the victims of that Holocaust: "Never again."

The war against one man's totalitarian dictatorship was not like other wars. The evil war of Nazism turned all values upside down. Nevertheless, we can mourn the German war dead today as human beings, crushed by a vicious ideology.

There are over 2,000 buried in Bitburg cemetery. Among them are 48 members of the SS. The crimes of the SS must rank among the most heinous in human history. But others buried there were simply soldiers in the German army. How many were fanatical followers of a dictator and willfully carried out his cruel orders? And how many were conscripts, forced into service during the death throes of the Nazi war machine? We do not know. Many, however, we know from the dates on their tombstones, were only teenagers at the time. There is one boy buried there who died a week before his 16th birthday.

There were thousands of such soldiers to whom Nazism meant no more than a brutal end to a short life. We do not believe in collective guilt. Only God can look into the human heart and all these men have now met their Supreme Judge and they have been judged by Him as we shall all be judged.

Our duty today is to mourn the human wreckage of totalitarianism and today in Bitburg cemetery we commemorated the potential good in humanity that was consumed back then, 40 years ago. Perhaps if that 15 year old soldier had lived, he would have joined his fellow countrymen in building this new Democratic Federal Republic of Germany devoted to human dignity and the defense of freedom that we celebrate today. Or perhaps his children, or his grandchildren might be among you here today at the Bitburg Air Base where new generations of Germans and Americans join together in friendship and common cause, dedicating their lives to preserving peace and guarding the security of the free world.

Too often in the past each war only planted the seeds of the next. We celebrate today the reconciliation between our two nations that has liberated us from that cycle of destruction. Look at what together we've accomplished. We who were enemies are now friends; we who were bitter adversaries are now the strongest of allies.

In the place of fear we've sown trust, and out of the ruins of war has blossomed an enduring peace. Tens of thousands of Americans have served in this town over the years. As the Mayor of Bitburg has said, in that time, there have been some 6,000 marriages between Germans and Americans, and many thousands of children have come from these unions. This is the real symbol of our future together, a future to be filled with hope, friendship, and freedom.

The hope that we see now could sometimes even be glimpsed in the darkest days of the War. I'm thinking of one special story -- that of a mother and her young son living alone in a modest cottage in the middle of the woods. And one night as the Battle of the Bulge exploded not far away, and around them, three young American soldiers arrived at their door -- they were standing there in the snow, lost behind enemy lines. All were frostbitten, one was badly wounded. Even though sheltering the enemy was punishable by death, she took them in and made them a supper with some of her last food.

And then, they heard another knock at the door. And this time four German soldiers stood there. The woman was afraid, but she quickly said with a firm voice, "...there will be no shooting here." She made all the soldiers lay down their weapons, and they all joined in the makeshift meal. Heinz and Willi, it turned out, were only 16; the corporal was the oldest at 23. Their natural suspicion dissolved in the warmth and the comfort of the cottage. One of the Germans, a former medical student, tended the wounded American.

But now, listen to the rest of the story through the eyes of one who was there, now a grown man, but that young lad that had been her son. He said, "The Mother said grace. I noticed that there were tears in her eyes as she said the old, familiar words, 'Komm, Herr Jesus. Be our guest.' And as I looked around the table, I saw tears, too, in the eyes of the battle-weary soldiers, boys again, some from America, some from Germany, all far from home."

That night -- as the storm of war tossed the world -- they had their own private armistice. The next morning the German corporal showed the Americans how to get back behind their own lines. And they all shook hands and went their separate ways. That happened to be Christmas Day, 40 years ago.

Those boys reconciled briefly in the midst of war. Surely, we allies in peacetime should honor the reconciliation of the last 40 years.

To the people of Bitburg, our hosts and the hosts of our servicemen, like that generous woman forty years ago, you make us feel very welcome. Vielen Dank. (Applause.)

And to the men and women of Bitburg Air Base, I just want to say that we know that even with such wonderful hosts, your job is not an easy one. You serve around the clock far from home, always ready to defend freedom. We are grateful and we are very proud of you.

Four decades ago we waged a great war to lift the darkness of evil from the world, to let men and women in this country and in every country live in the sunshine of liberty. Our victory was great and the Federal Republic, Italy and Japan are now in the community of free nations. But the struggle for freedom is not complete, for today much of the world is still cast in totalitarian darkness.

Twenty-two years ago President John F. Kennedy went to the Berlin Wall and proclaimed that he, too, was a Berliner. Well, today freedom-loving people around the world must say, I am a Berliner, I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-Semitism, I am an Afghan, and I am a prisoner of the Gulag, I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off of the coast of Vietnam, I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban, and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a potential victim of totalitarianism.

The one lesson of World War II, the one lesson of Nazism, is that freedom must always be stronger than totalitarianism and that good must always be stronger than evil. The moral measure of our two nations will be found in the resolve we show to preserve liberty, to protect life, and to honor and cherish all God's children.

That is why the free, democratic Federal Republic of Germany is such a profound and hopeful testament to the human spirit. We cannot undo the crimes and wars of yesterday, nor call back the millions back to life, but we can give meaning to the past by learning its lessons and making a better future. We can let our pain drive us to greater efforts to heal humanity's suffering.

Today I have traveled 220 miles from Bergen-Belsen, and, I feel, forty years in time. With the lessons of the past firmly in our minds, we have turned a new, brighter page in history.

One of the many who wrote me about this visit was a young woman who had recently been Bat Mitzvahed.

She urged me to lay the wreath at Bitburg Cemetery in honor of the future of Germany. And that is what we've done.

On this 40th anniversary of World War II, we mark the day when the hate, the evil and the obscenity is ended and we commemorate the rekindling of the democratic spirit in Germany.

There's much to make us hopeful on this historic anniversary. One of the symbols of that hate -- that could have been that hope, a little while ago, when we heard a German band playing the American national anthem and an American band playing the German national anthem. While much of the world still huddles in the darkness of oppression, we can see a new dawn of freedom sweeping the globe. And we can see in the new democracies of Latin America, in the new economic freedoms and prosperity in Asia, in the slow movement toward peace in the Middle East and in the strengthening alliance of democratic nations in Europe and America that the light from that dawn is growing stronger.

Together, let us gather in that light and walk out of the shadow. Let us live in peace.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

END

3:46 P.M. (L)

(GILDER)

MAY 5, 1985

BITBURG AIR BASE
BITBURG, GERMANY

I HAVE JUST COME FROM THE CEMETERY
WHERE GERMAN WAR DEAD LAY AT REST.
NO ONE COULD VISIT THERE WITHOUT DEEP AND
CONFLICTING EMOTIONS. I FELT GREAT SADNESS
THAT HISTORY COULD BE FILLED WITH SUCH
WASTE, DESTRUCTION, AND EVIL. BUT MY HEART
WAS ALSO LIFTED BY THE KNOWLEDGE THAT FROM
THE ASHES HAS COME HOPE, AND THAT FROM THE
TERRORS OF THE PAST WE HAVE BUILT 40 YEARS
OF PEACE AND FREEDOM -- AND RECONCILIATION
AMONG OUR NATIONS.

THIS VISIT HAS STIRRED MANY EMOTIONS IN
THE AMERICAN AND GERMAN PEOPLE, TOO.
I HAVE RECEIVED MANY LETTERS SINCE FIRST
DECIDING TO COME TO BITBURG CEMETERY,
SOME SUPPORTIVE, OTHERS DEEPLY CONCERNED AND
QUESTIONING, OTHERS OPPOSED.

SOME OLD WOUNDS HAVE BEEN REOPENED,
AND THIS I REGRET VERY MUCH, BECAUSE THIS
SHOULD BE A TIME OF HEALING.

TO THE VETERANS AND FAMILIES OF AMERICAN
SERVICEMEN WHO STILL CARRY THE SCARS AND
FEEL THE PAINFUL LOSSES OF THAT WAR,
OUR GESTURE OF RECONCILIATION WITH THE
GERMAN PEOPLE TODAY IN NO WAY MINIMIZES OUR
LOVE AND HONOR FOR THOSE WHO FOUGHT AND DIED
FOR OUR COUNTRY. THEY GAVE THEIR LIVES TO
RESCUE FREEDOM IN ITS DARKEST HOUR.

THE ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRATIC NATIONS THAT
GUARDS THE FREEDOM OF MILLIONS IN EUROPE AND
AMERICA TODAY STANDS AS LIVING TESTIMONY
THAT THEIR NOBLE SACRIFICE WAS NOT IN VAIN.

NO, THEIR SACRIFICE WAS NOT IN VAIN. I HAVE TO TELL YOU THAT NOTHING WILL EVER FILL ME WITH GREATER HOPE THAN THE SIGHT OF TWO FORMER WAR HEROES WHO MET TODAY AT THE BITBURG CEMETERY: EACH AMONG THE BRAVEST OF THE BRAVE; EACH AN ENEMY OF THE OTHER 40 YEARS AGO; EACH A WITNESS TO THE HORRORS OF WAR; BUT TODAY, THEY CAME TOGETHER, AMERICAN AND GERMAN, GENERAL MATTHEW B. RIDGWAY AND GENERAL JOHANNER STEINHOFF; RECONCILED AND UNITED, THEY REACHED OVER THE GRAVES TO ONE ANOTHER LIKE BROTHERS, AND GRASPED HANDS IN PEACE.

TO THE SURVIVORS OF THE HOLOCAUST:
YOUR TERRIBLE SUFFERING HAS MADE YOU EVER
VIGILANT AGAINST EVIL. MANY OF YOU ARE
WORRIED THAT RECONCILIATION MEANS
FORGETTING. I PROMISE YOU, WE WILL NEVER
FORGET. I HAVE JUST COME THIS MORNING FROM
BERGEN-BELSEN, WHERE THE HORROR OF THAT
TERRIBLE CRIME, THE HOLOCAUST, WAS FOREVER
BURNED UPON MY MEMORY. NO, WE WILL NEVER
FORGET, AND WE SAY WITH THE VICTIMS OF THAT
HOLOCAUST: "NEVER AGAIN."

THE WAR AGAINST ONE MAN'S TOTALITARIAN
DICTATORSHIP WAS NOT LIKE OTHER WARS.
THE EVIL WORLD OF NAZISM TURNED ALL VALUES
UPSIDE DOWN. NEVERTHELESS, WE CAN MOURN THE
GERMAN WAR DEAD TODAY AS HUMAN BEINGS,
CRUSHED BY A VICIOUS IDEOLOGY.

THERE ARE OVER 2,000 BURIED IN BITBURG
CEMETERY. AMONG THEM ARE 48 MEMBERS OF
THE S.S. THE CRIMES OF THE S.S. MUST RANK
AMONG THE MOST HEINOUS IN HUMAN HISTORY.

BUT OTHERS BURIED THERE WERE SIMPLY SOLDIERS IN THE GERMAN ARMY. HOW MANY WERE FANATICAL FOLLOWERS OF A DICTATOR AND WILLFULLY CARRIED OUT HIS CRUEL ORDERS? AND HOW MANY WERE CONSCRIPTS, FORCED INTO SERVICE DURING THE DEATH THROES OF THE NAZI WAR MACHINE? WE DO NOT KNOW. MANY, HOWEVER, WE KNOW FROM THE DATES ON THEIR TOMBSTONES, WERE ONLY TEENAGERS AT THE TIME. THERE IS ONE BOY BURIED THERE WHO DIED A WEEK BEFORE HIS 16TH BIRTHDAY.

THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF SUCH SOLDIERS TO WHOM NAZISM MEANT NO MORE THAN A BRUTAL END TO A SHORT LIFE. WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN COLLECTIVE GUILT. ONLY GOD CAN LOOK INTO THE HUMAN HEART. ALL THESE MEN HAVE NOW MET THEIR SUPREME JUDGE, AND THEY HAVE BEEN JUDGED BY HIM, AS WE SHALL ALL BE JUDGED.

OUR DUTY TODAY IS TO MOURN THE HUMAN WRECKAGE OF TOTALITARIANISM; AND TODAY, IN BITBURG CEMETERY, WE COMMEMORATED THE POTENTIAL GOOD AND HUMANITY THAT WAS CONSUMED BACK THEN, 40 YEARS AGO. PERHAPS IF THAT 15-YEAR-OLD SOLDIER HAD LIVED, HE WOULD HAVE JOINED HIS FELLOW COUNTRYMEN IN BUILDING THE NEW DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY DEVOTED TO HUMAN DIGNITY AND THE DEFENSE OF FREEDOM THAT WE CELEBRATE TODAY. OR PERHAPS HIS CHILDREN OR GRANDCHILDREN MIGHT BE AMONG YOU HERE TODAY AT THE BITBURG AIR BASE, WHERE NEW GENERATIONS OF GERMANS AND AMERICANS JOIN TOGETHER IN FRIENDSHIP AND COMMON CAUSE, DEDICATING THEIR LIVES TO PRESERVING PEACE AND GUARDING THE SECURITY OF THE FREE WORLD.

TOO OFTEN IN THE PAST, EACH WAR ONLY PLANTED THE SEEDS OF THE NEXT. WE CELEBRATE TODAY THE RECONCILIATION BETWEEN OUR TWO NATIONS THAT HAS LIBERATED US FROM THAT CYCLE OF DESTRUCTION. LOOK AT WHAT TOGETHER WE HAVE ACCOMPLISHED: WE WHO WERE ENEMIES ARE NOW FRIENDS; WE WHO WERE BITTER ADVERSARIES ARE NOW THE STRONGEST OF ALLIES. IN THE PLACE OF FEAR WE HAVE SOWN TRUST, AND OUT OF THE RUINS OF WAR HAS BLOSSOMED AN ENDURING PEACE. TENS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICANS HAVE SERVED IN THIS TOWN OVER THE YEARS. AS THE MAYOR OF BITBURG HAS SAID, IN THAT TIME THERE HAVE BEEN SOME 6,000 MARRIAGES BETWEEN GERMANS AND AMERICANS, AND MANY THOUSANDS OF CHILDREN HAVE COME FROM THESE UNIONS. THIS IS THE REAL SYMBOL OF OUR FUTURE TOGETHER, A FUTURE TO BE FILLED WITH HOPE, FRIENDSHIP, AND FREEDOM.

THE HOPE WE SEE NOW COULD SOMETIMES EVEN BE GLIMPSED IN THE DARKEST DAYS OF THE WAR. I'M THINKING OF ONE SPECIAL STORY -- THAT OF A MOTHER AND HER YOUNG SON LIVING ALONE IN A MODEST COTTAGE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WOODS. ONE NIGHT AS THE BATTLE OF THE BULGE EXPLODED NOT FAR AWAY, THREE YOUNG AMERICAN SOLDIERS ARRIVED AT THEIR DOOR -- STANDING IN THE SNOW, LOST BEHIND ENEMY LINES. ALL WERE FROSTBITTEN AND ONE BADLY WOUNDED. EVEN THOUGH SHELTERING THE ENEMY WAS PUNISHABLE BY DEATH, SHE TOOK THEM IN AND MADE THEM A SUPPER WITH SOME OF HER LAST FOOD.

SOON, THEY HEARD ANOTHER KNOCK AT THE DOOR. THIS TIME FOUR GERMAN SOLDIERS STOOD THERE. THE WOMAN WAS AFRAID, BUT SHE QUICKLY SAID WITH A FIRM VOICE, "...THERE WILL BE NO SHOOTING HERE."

SHE MADE ALL THE SOLDIERS LAY DOWN THEIR WEAPONS, AND THEY ALL JOINED IN THE MAKESHIFT MEAL. HEINZ AND WILLI, IT TURNED OUT, WERE ONLY 16; THE CORPORAL WAS THE OLDEST AT 23. THEIR NATURAL SUSPICION DISSOLVED IN THE WARMTH AND COMFORT OF THE COTTAGE. ONE OF THE GERMANS, A FORMER MEDICAL STUDENT, TENDED THE WOUNDED AMERICAN.

NOW, LISTEN TO THE STORY THROUGH THE EYES OF ONE WHO WAS THERE:

"THEN MOTHER SAID GRACE," REMEMBERED THE BOY. "I NOTICED THAT THERE WERE TEARS IN HER EYES AS SHE SAID THE OLD, FAMILIAR WORDS, 'KOMM, HERR JESUS. BE OUR GUEST.' AND AS I LOOKED AROUND THE TABLE, I SAW TEARS, TOO, IN THE EYES OF THE BATTLE-WEARY SOLDIERS, BOYS AGAIN, SOME FROM AMERICA, SOME FROM GERMANY, ALL FAR FROM HOME."

THAT NIGHT -- AS THE STORM OF WAR
TOSSED THE WORLD -- THEY HAD THEIR OWN
PRIVATE ARMISTICE. THE NEXT MORNING THE
GERMAN CORPORAL SHOWED THE AMERICANS HOW TO
GET BACK BEHIND THEIR OWN LINES.
THEY ALL SHOOK HANDS AND WENT THEIR SEPARATE
WAYS.

THAT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY, 40 YEARS AGO.
THOSE BOYS RECONCILED BRIEFLY IN THE
MIDST OF WAR. SURELY, WE ALLIES IN
PEACETIME SHOULD HONOR THE RECONCILIATION OF
THE LAST 40 YEARS.

TO THE PEOPLE OF BITBURG, OUR HOSTS AND
THE HOSTS OF OUR SERVICEMEN:
LIKE THAT GENEROUS WOMAN 40 YEARS AGO,
YOU MAKE US FEEL VERY WELCOME.
(VEEL-EN DONK).

AND TO THE MEN AND WOMEN OF BITBURG AIR
BASE, I JUST WANT TO SAY THAT WE KNOW THAT,
EVEN WITH SUCH WONDERFUL HOSTS, YOUR JOB IS
NOT AN EASY ONE.

YOU SERVE AROUND THE CLOCK, FAR FROM HOME,
ALWAYS READY TO DEFEND FREEDOM. WE ARE
GRATEFUL, AND VERY PROUD OF YOU.

FOUR DECADES AGO, WE WAGED A GREAT WAR
TO LIFT THE DARKNESS OF EVIL FROM THE WORLD,
TO LET MEN AND WOMEN IN THIS COUNTRY AND IN
EVERY COUNTRY LIVE IN THE SUNSHINE OF
LIBERTY. OUR VICTORY WAS GREAT,
AND THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC, ITALY,
AND JAPAN ARE NOW IN THE COMMUNITY OF FREE
NATIONS. BUT THE STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IS
NOT COMPLETE, FOR TODAY MUCH OF THE WORLD IS
STILL CAST IN TOTALITARIAN DARKNESS.

TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO, PRESIDENT JOHN F.
KENNEDY WENT TO THE BERLIN WALL AND
PROCLAIMED THAT HE, TOO, WAS A BERLINER.

TODAY, FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD MUST SAY, I AM A BERLINER, I AM A JEW IN A WORLD STILL THREATENED BY ANTI-SEMITISM, I AM AN AFGHAN, AND I AM A PRISONER OF THE GULAG, I AM A REFUGEE IN A CROWDED BOAT FOUNDERING OFF THE COAST OF VIETNAM, I AM A LAOTIAN, A CAMBODIAN, A CUBAN, AND A MISKITO INDIAN IN NICARAGUA. I, TOO, AM A POTENTIAL VICTIM OF TOTALITARIANISM.

THE ONE LESSON OF WORLD WAR II, THE ONE LESSON OF NAZISM, IS THAT FREEDOM MUST ALWAYS BE STRONGER THAN TOTALITARIANISM; THAT GOOD MUST ALWAYS BE STRONGER THAN EVIL. THE MORAL MEASURE OF OUR TWO NATIONS WILL BE FOUND IN THE RESOLVE WE SHOW TO PRESERVE LIBERTY, TO PROTECT LIFE, AND TO HONOR AND CHERISH ALL GOD'S CHILDREN.

THAT IS WHY THE FREE, DEMOCRATIC FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY IS SUCH A PROFOUND AND HOPEFUL TESTAMENT TO THE HUMAN SPIRIT. WE CANNOT UNDO THE CRIMES AND WARS OF YESTERDAY, NOR CALL THE MILLIONS BACK TO LIFE. BUT WE CAN GIVE MEANING TO THE PAST BY LEARNING ITS LESSONS AND MAKING A BETTER FUTURE. WE CAN LET OUR PAIN DRIVE US TO GREATER EFFORTS TO HEAL HUMANITY'S SUFFERING.

TODAY, I HAVE TRAVELED 220 MILES FROM BERGEN-BELSEN AND, I FEEL, 40 YEARS IN TIME. WITH THE LESSONS OF THE PAST FIRMLY IN OUR MINDS, WE HAVE TURNED A NEW, BRIGHTER PAGE IN HISTORY. ONE OF THE MANY WHO WROTE ME ABOUT THIS VISIT WAS A YOUNG WOMAN WHO HAD RECENTLY BEEN (BOTT MITTS-VUD). SHE URGED ME TO LAY THE WREATH AT BITBURG CEMETERY IN HONOR OF THE FUTURE OF GERMANY; AND THAT IS WHAT WE HAVE DONE.

ON THIS 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF WORLD WAR II,
WE MARK THE DAY WHEN THE HATE,
THE EVIL, AND THE OBSCENITIES ENDED,
AND WE COMMEMORATE THE REKINDLING OF THE
DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT IN GERMANY.

THERE IS MUCH TO MAKE US HOPEFUL ON
THIS HISTORIC ANNIVERSARY. WHILE MUCH OF
THE WORLD STILL HUDDLES IN THE DARKNESS OF
OPPRESSION, WE CAN SEE A NEW DAWN OF FREEDOM
SWEEPING THE GLOBE. AND WE CAN SEE --
IN THE NEW DEMOCRACIES OF LATIN AMERICA,
IN THE NEW ECONOMIC FREEDOMS AND
PROSPERITY IN ASIA, IN THE SLOW MOVEMENT
TOWARD PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND IN THE
STRENGTHENING ALLIANCE OF DEMOCRATIC NATIONS
IN EUROPE AND AMERICA -- THAT THE LIGHT FROM
THAT DAWN IS GROWING STRONGER.

TOGETHER LET US GATHER IN THAT LIGHT,
AND WALK OUT OF THE SHADOW, AND LET US LIVE
IN PEACE.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL.

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AS

(Gilder/BE/RR)
May 3, 1985
6:00 p.m. (FRG)

**PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: BITBURG AIR BASE
BITBURG, GERMANY
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1985**

I have just come from the cemetery where German war dead lay at rest. No one could visit there without deep and conflicting emotions. I felt great sadness that history could be filled with such waste, destruction, and evil. But my heart was also lifted by the knowledge that from the ashes has come hope, and that from the terrors of the past we have built 40 years of peace and freedom -- and reconciliation among our nations.

This visit has stirred many emotions in the American and German people, too. I have received many letters since first deciding to come to Bitburg cemetery, some supportive, others deeply concerned and questioning, others opposed. Some old wounds have been reopened, and this I regret very much, because this should be a time of healing. To the veterans and families of American servicemen who still carry the scars and feel the painful losses of that War, our gesture of reconciliation with the German people today in no way minimizes our love and honor for those who fought and died for our country. They gave their lives to rescue freedom in its darkest hour. The alliance of democratic nations that guards the freedom of millions in Europe and America today stands as living testimony that their noble sacrifice was not in vain.

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never forget. I have just come this morning from Bergen-Belsen, where the horror of that terrible crime, the Holocaust, was forever burned upon my memory. No, we will never forget, and we say with the victims of that Holocaust: "Never again."

The war against one man's totalitarian dictatorship was not like other wars. The evil world of Nazism turned all values upside down. Nevertheless, we can mourn the German war dead today as human beings, crushed by a vicious ideology.

There are over 2,000 buried in Bitburg cemetery. Among them are 48 members of the SS. The crimes of the SS must rank among the most heinous in human history. But others buried there were simply soldiers in the German army. How many were fanatical followers of a dictator and willfully carried out his cruel orders? And how many were conscripts, forced into service during the death throes of the Nazi war machine? We do not know. Many, however, we know from the dates on their tombstones, were only teenagers at the time. There is one boy buried there who died ⁹ weeks before his 16th birthday.

There were thousands of such soldiers to whom Nazism meant no more than a brutal end to a short life. We do not believe in collective guilt. Only God can look into the human heart. All these men have now met their Supreme Judge, and they have been judged by Him, as we shall all be judged.

Our duty today is to mourn the human wreckage of totalitarianism; and today, in Bitburg cemetery, we commemorated the potential good and humanity that was consumed back then, 40 years ago. Perhaps if that 15-year-old soldier had lived, he

would have joined his fellow countrymen in building the new democratic Federal Republic of Germany devoted to human dignity and the defense of freedom that we celebrate today. Or perhaps his children or grandchildren might be among you here today at the Bitburg Air Base, where new generations of Germans and Americans join together in friendship and common cause, dedicating their lives to preserving peace and guarding the security of the free world.

Too often in the past, each war only planted the seeds of the next. We celebrate today the reconciliation between our two nations that has liberated us from that cycle of destruction. Look at what together we have accomplished: We who were enemies are now friends; we who were bitter adversaries are now the strongest of allies. In the place of fear we have sown trust, and out of the ruins of war has blossomed an enduring peace. Tens of thousands of Americans have served in this town over the years. As the Mayor of Bitburg has said, in that time there have been some 6,000 marriages between Germans and Americans, and many thousands of children have come from these unions. This is the real symbol of our future together, a future to be filled with hope, friendship, and freedom.

The hope we see now could sometimes even be glimpsed in the darkest days of the War. I'm thinking of one special story -- that of a mother and her young son living alone in a modest cottage in the middle of the woods. One night as the Battle of the Bulge exploded not far away, three young American soldiers arrived at their door -- standing in the snow, lost behind enemy

lines. All were frostbitten and one badly wounded. Even though sheltering the enemy was punishable by death, she took them in and made them a supper with some of her last food.

✓
Soon, they heard another knock at the door. This time four German soldiers stood there. The woman was afraid, but she quickly said with a firm voice, ". . . there will be no shooting here." She made all the soldiers lay down their weapons, and they all joined in the makeshift meal. Heinz and Willi, it turned out, were only 16; the corporal was the oldest at 23. Their natural suspicion dissolved in the warmth and comfort of the cottage. One of the Germans, a former medical student, tended the wounded American.

Now, listen to the story through the eyes of one who was there:

"Then Mother said grace," remembered the boy. "I noticed that there were tears in her eyes as she said the old, familiar words, 'Komm, Herr Jesus. Be our guest.' And as I looked around the table, I saw tears, too, in the eyes of the battle-weary soldiers, boys again, some from America, some from Germany, all far from home."

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To the people of Bitburg, our hosts and the hosts of our servicemen: like that generous woman ⁴⁰~~47~~ years ago, you make us feel very welcome. Vielen dank [VEEL-en donk].

And to the men and women of Bitburg Air Base, I just want to say that we know that, even with such wonderful hosts, your job is not an easy one. You serve around the clock, far from home, always ready to defend freedom. We are grateful, and very proud of you.

Four decades ago, we waged a great war to lift the darkness of evil from the world, to let men and women in this country and in every country live in the sunshine of liberty. Our victory was great, and the Federal Republic, Italy, and Japan are now in the community of free nations. But the struggle for freedom is not complete, for today much of the world is still cast in totalitarian darkness.

Twenty-two years ago, President John F. Kennedy went to the Berlin Wall and proclaimed that he, too, was a Berliner. Today, freedom-loving people around the world must say, I am a Berliner, I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-Semitism, I am an Afghan, and I am a prisoner of the Gulag, I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam, I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban, and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua. I, too, am a potential victim of totalitarianism.

The one lesson of World War II, the one lesson of Nazism, is that freedom must always be stronger than totalitarianism; that good must always be stronger than evil. The moral measure of our two nations will be found in the resolve we show to preserve liberty, to protect life, and to honor and cherish all God's children.

That is why the free, democratic Federal Republic of Germany is such a profound and hopeful testament to the human spirit. We cannot undo the crimes and wars of yesterday, nor call the millions back to life. But we can give meaning to the past by learning its lessons and making a better future. We can let our pain drive us to greater efforts to heal humanity's suffering.

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Together let us gather in that light, and walk out of the shadow, and let us live in peace.

Thank you and God bless you all.

(Gilder/BE/RR)
May 3, 1985
6:00 p.m. (FRG)

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: BITBURG AIR BASE
BITBURG, GERMANY
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1985

I have just come from the cemetery where German war dead lay at rest. No one could visit there without deep and conflicting emotions. I felt great sadness that history could be filled with such waste, destruction, and evil. But my heart was also lifted by the knowledge that from the ashes has come hope, and that from the terrors of the past we have built 40 years of peace and freedom -- and reconciliation among our nations.

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3 To the survivors of the Holocaust: your terrible suffering has made you ever vigilant against evil. Many of you are worried that reconciliation means forgetting. I promise you, we will

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There were thousands of such soldiers to whom Nazism meant no more than a brutal end to a short life. We do not believe in collective guilt. Only God can look into the human heart. All these men have now met their Supreme Judge, and they have been judged by Him, as we shall all be judged.

Our duty today is to mourn the human wreckage of totalitarianism; and today, in Bitburg cemetery, we commemorated the potential good and humanity that was consumed back then, 40 years ago. Perhaps if that 15-year-old soldier had lived, he

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Thank you and God bless you all.

KW Master

(Gilder/BE/RR)
May 2, 1985
11:00 a.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: BITBURG AIR FORCE BASE
BITBURG, GERMANY
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1985

X

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To the survivors of the Holocaust: your terrible suffering has made you ever vigilant against evil. Many of you are worried that reconciliation means forgetting. I promise you, we will

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There are over 2,000 buried in Bitburg cemetery. Among them are ~~16~~ members of the SS. The crimes of the SS must rank among the most heinous in human history. But others buried ~~here~~ ^{there} were simply soldiers in the German army. How many were fanatical followers of a dictator ~~who~~ ^{and} willfully carried out his cruel orders? And how many were conscripts, forced into service during the death throes of the Nazi war machine? We do not know. Many, however, we know from the (dates on their tombstones) were only teenagers at the time. There is one boy buried ~~here~~ ^{there} who died 2 weeks before his 16th birthday.

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Rec'd Abiam



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 than ~~100,000~~ ^{TENS of thousands of} Americans have served in this town over the years.

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Reibling
 Mayor of
 Bitburg
 MAYOR
 SAYS 5000

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Keith Hebach



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(Gilder/BE/RR)

May 2, 1985

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BITBURG, GERMANY
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1985

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Too often in the past, each war only planted the seeds of the next. We celebrate today the reconciliation between our two nations that has liberated us from that cycle of destruction. Look at what together we have accomplished: We who were enemies are now friends; we who were bitter adversaries are now the strongest allies. In the place of fear we have sown trust, and out of the ruins of war has blossomed an enduring peace. More than 100,000 Americans have served in this town over the years. In that time there have been more than 5,000 marriages between Germans and Americans, and many thousands of children have come from these unions. This is the real symbol of our future together, a future to be filled with hope, friendship, and freedom.

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Now, listen to the story through the eyes of one who was there:

"Then mother said grace," remembered the boy. "I noticed there were tears in her eyes as she said the old, familiar words, 'Komm, Herr Jesus. Be our guest.' And as I looked around the table, I saw tears, too, in the eyes of the battle-weary soldiers, boys again, some from America, some from Germany, all far from home."

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Twenty-two years ago, President John F. Kennedy stood at the Berlin Wall and proclaimed that he, too, was a Berliner. Today, freedom-loving people around the world must say, I am a Berliner, I am a Jew in a world still threatened by anti-semitism, I am an Afghan, and I am a prisoner of the Gulag, I am a refugee in a crowded boat foundering off the coast of Vietnam, I am a Laotian, a Cambodian, a Cuban, and a Miskito Indian in Nicaragua; I, ~~too~~, am a potential victim of totalitarianism.

The one lesson of World War II, the one lesson of Nazism, is that freedom must always be stronger than totalitarianism; that good must always be stronger than evil. The moral measure of our two nations will be found in the resolve we show to preserve liberty, to protect life, and to honor and cherish all God's children.

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There is much to make us hopeful on this historic anniversary. While much of the world still huddles in the darkness of oppression, we can see a new dawn of freedom sweeping the globe. And we can see -- in the new democracies of Latin America, in the new economic freedoms and prosperity in Asia, in

the slow movement toward peace in the Middle East, and in the strengthening alliance of democratic nations in Europe and America -- that the light from that dawn is growing stronger.

Together let us gather in that light, and walk out of the shadow, and let us live in peace.

Thank you and God bless you all.

(Gilder/BE/RR)

May 2, 1985

11:00 a.m.

PRESIDENTIAL REMARKS: BITBURG AIR FORCE BASE
BITBURG, GERMANY
SUNDAY, MAY 5, 1985

I have just come from the cemetery where German war dead lay at rest. No one could visit there without deep and conflicting emotions. I felt great sadness that history could be filled with such waste, destruction, and evil. But my heart was also lifted by the knowledge that from the ashes has come hope, and that from the terrors of the past we have built 40 years of peace and freedom -- and reconciliation among our nations.

This visit has stirred many emotions in the American and German people, too. I have received many letters since first deciding to come to Bitburg cemetery, some supportive, others deeply concerned and questioning, others opposed. Some old wounds have been reopened, and this I regret very much, because this should be a time of healing. To the veterans and families of American servicemen who still carry the scars and feel the painful losses of that War, our gesture of reconciliation with the German people today in no way minimizes our love and honor for those who fought and died for our country. They gave their lives to rescue freedom in its darkest hour. The alliance of democratic nations that guards the freedom of millions in Europe and America today stands as living testimony that their noble sacrifice was not in vain.

To the survivors of the Holocaust: your terrible suffering has made you ever vigilant against evil. Many of you are worried that reconciliation means forgetting. I promise you, we will

never forget. I have just come this morning from Bergen-Belsen, where the horror of that momentous crime was forever burned upon my memory. No, we will never forget, and we say with the victims of the Holocaust: "Never again."

The war against one man's totalitarian dictatorship was not like other wars. The evil world of Nazism turned all values upside down. Nevertheless, we can mourn the German war dead today as human beings, crushed by a vicious ideology.

There are over 2,000 buried in Bitburg cemetery. Among them are 49 members of the SS. The crimes of the SS must rank among the most heinous in human history. But others buried here were simply soldiers in the German army. How many were fanatical followers of a dictator who willfully carried out his cruel orders? And how many were conscripts, forced into service during the death throes of the Nazi war machine? We do not know. Many, however, we know from the dates on their tombstones, were only teenagers at the time. There is one boy buried here who died 2 weeks before his 16th birthday.

There were thousands of such soldiers to whom Nazism meant no more than a brutal end to a short life. We do not believe in collective guilt. Only God can look into the human heart. All these men have now met their Supreme Judge, and they have been judged by Him. As shall we all.

Our duty today is to mourn the human wreckage of totalitarianism; and today, in Bitburg cemetery, we commemorated the potential good and humanity that was consumed back then, 40 years ago. Perhaps if that 15-year-old soldier had lived, he

would have joined his fellow countrymen in building the new democratic German nation devoted to human dignity and the defense of freedom that we celebrate today. Or perhaps his children or grandchildren might be among you here today at the Bitburg Air Base, where new generations of Germans and Americans join together in friendship and common cause, dedicating their lives to preserving peace and guarding the security of the free world.

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