

Testimony of Assistant Secretary Beth Jones

Senate Foreign Relations Committee – Subcommittee on Europe

April 8, 2004

Written Statement

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, thank you for the invitation to appear before you today. I would like to take this opportunity if I may, Mr. Chairman, to compliment you on your personal commitment and the leadership you have shown in combating all forms of racism and intolerance, and in particular the scourge of anti-Semitism. Anti-Semitism again has emerged as a serious problem in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including here in the United States. I would also like to underscore our continued commitment to work closely with the Congress to do everything we can to deal effectively with the new threat of anti-Semitism, and to ensure that all citizens in Europe and elsewhere can live their lives in safety and dignity whatever their race, ethnicity or religious beliefs.

Since last October when the Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues Ambassador Edward O'Donnell appeared before you, the Administration and Department of State have continued to make the fight against anti-Semitism one of our highest priorities. Our work runs on three tracks: first, to work closely with our European allies, and in particular within the context of the Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), to develop concrete, effective ways to address the problem of anti-Semitism; second, to work through the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research to educate the current and future generations about the lessons of the Holocaust; and third, bilateral action led by Ambassadors and Embassy staffs to work with host governments against anti-Semitism and hate crimes.

OSCE

Last June in Vienna, the OSCE held a conference devoted exclusively to the problem of anti-Semitism. The United States was instrumental in developing a consensus within the OSCE for this meeting. The conference was highly successful: for the first time anti-Semitism was identified as a specific human rights issue, distinct from religious discrimination or ethnic and racial prejudice. While the conference took no formal decisions, the participants recognized the need to track anti-Semitic incidents in order to build a better understanding of the breadth and depth of the issue.

Six months later at Maastricht, the OSCE Ministerial Council addressed a number of forms of racism, xenophobia and discrimination, including anti-Semitism that special OSCE conferences had addressed during the year. During this meeting,

which I attended with Secretary Powell, the Council took a formal decision to follow-up on the Vienna Conference and welcomed the offer of the Federal Republic of Germany to host a second conference on anti-Semitism, on April 28-29, 2004. In addition, the Council approved a meeting on combating hate crimes fueled by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda on the Internet to be held in June in Paris and a conference on racism, xenophobia and discrimination in September in Brussels.

At Maastricht, the Ministers also encouraged participating states to collect information on hate crimes and assigned the task of serving as a collection point for this information to the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). OSCE members also agreed to inform ODIHR about existing legislation on hate crimes and, where appropriate, to seek ODIHR's assistance in the drafting and review of such legislation.

We are now deeply engaged in preparations for this important, even historic conference in Berlin. The President has named a number of leading individuals from the Congress, as well as outstanding NGO members and private citizens active in the fight against anti-Semitism, to represent the United States: Former Mayor Edward Koch, a strong and experienced leader for many years in the fight for

tolerance and racial justice, will head the U.S. Delegation. Stephan M. Minikes, our Ambassador to the OSCE in Vienna, and Special Envoy for Holocaust Issues Edward O'Donnell will join him. We are pleased that Senator Voinovich, a distinguished member of this committee and internationally recognized as a leader in the fight against anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance, will also be a member of the United States Delegation. We are honored by Senator Voinovich's participation and appreciate the strong leadership and wise counsel he will provide. Two distinguished members of the House of Representatives will be on the U.S. delegation and play a

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sion. Several prominent NGO leaders and private

citizens concerned about intolerance and anti-Semitism in the United States and

overseas will complete the U.S. team.

Goals for Berlin

What are our goals for Berlin?

Mr. Chairman, building on the work of the anti-Semitism meeting in Vienna last

June and of that of the Maastricht OSCE Ministerial Council, the United States

believes that the objectives of the meeting in Berlin are to condemn all forms of

anti-Semitism, and for the 55 member states of the OSCE to reach agreement on a

number of specific steps to combat anti-Semitism within the OSCE region.

Specifically, we are working intensively to ensure that Berlin will recommend to the

OSCE Ministerial Council that member states commit to:

- ➤ Ensure that their legal systems foster a safe environment, free from anti-Semitic harassment, violence and discrimination;
- ➤ Promote educational programs for combating anti-Semitism;
- ➤ Support remembrance of and education about the Holocaust and the importance of respect for all ethnic and religious groups;
- ➤ Combat hate crimes, which can be fueled by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic propaganda in the media and elsewhere;
- ➤ Collect and maintain reliable information and statistics about anti-Semitic incidents and other hate crimes, and periodically report this information to the OSCE/ODIHR in Warsaw;
- ➤ Work with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to determine appropriate ways to review periodically the problem of anti-Semitism; and, lastly,
- ➤ Encourage future informal exchanges among experts on best practices in law enforcement and education.

The role of ODIHR, as noted, will be important to our success in implementing these concrete measures to fight anti-Semitism within the OSCE area. We believe that ODIHR, along with other relevant international institutions and NGOs, should closely track anti-Semitic incidents making full use of all the information available. ODIHR should report its findings to the OSCE Permanent Council and

to the OSCE's annual Human Dimension Meeting, and make these findings available to the public. These reports should then be considered in deciding the priorities of the work of the OSCE as a whole.

We see as an additional task for ODIHR collecting and disseminating information throughout the OSCE region on best practices for preventing and responding to anti-Semitism. We believe that ODIHR should actively engage participating States on their efforts to fight anti-Semitism.

Mr. Chairman, at a time when Jews are being harassed and physically attacked in Europe and in Canada, the United States and elsewhere in the world, and when their synagogues, schools and cemeteries are being defaced, desecrated and destroyed, it is a matter of urgency that we succeed in moving in the directions that I have just outlined to combat anti-Semitism.

We are now seeing anti-Semitism in both its old virulent and in new hateful forms. The traditional anti-Semitism of neo-Nazis and other far-right hate groups is now part of a broader template. This includes anti-Semitism masked as anti-globalism,

fanned, for example, by a resurgence of the decades old lies of such works as “The Protocols of the Elders of Zion.” There is also anti-Semitism in the guise of criticism of the State of Israel that goes well beyond any legitimate criticism of Israel. We must work together to act resolutely to counter these lies. The U.S. Government will speak forcefully against hatred and the hate crimes they produce at the OSCE Berlin Anti-Semitism meeting. We will seek agreement to the proposals I have outlined, and we will work to develop with our European allies and NGO partners further robust measures to fight anti-Semitism.

Stronger Response in Europe

Much remains to be done in Europe to tackle anti-Semitism. This includes, as the recent report on “Manifestations of Anti-Semitism in the European Union” from the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia has pointed out, in the field of monitoring and data collection on anti-Semitism. But there have been some encouraging signs as well. European governments and political leaders now react more quickly and forcefully than even a few months ago in response to anti-Semitic incidents. There is a growing awareness of anti-Semitism in Europe and a broader public debate. The governments of France and Italy have created inter-ministerial committees to fight racism and anti-Semitism. In France there is heightened security to protect Jewish properties, and better training for judges who

try hate crimes combined with new legislation that provides for stiffer penalties. In February, the President of the European Commission held a seminar in Brussels on anti-Semitism. Overall throughout Europe, tolerance education is beginning to become more the norm than the exception.

Holocaust Education

One of the most important things we can do to defeat anti-Semitism is to educate the younger generation in Europe on the lessons of the Holocaust. Let me highlight the work of the Task Force for Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research. I know many of you are familiar with this organization, initiated by Swedish Prime Minister Persson in 1998. Since then, the Task Force has grown rapidly from its original nucleus of three members to now 16 members and more countries are in line to join. The Task Force works on the basis of consensus and without a bureaucracy. The modest annual contribution from each country of \$25,000 has created a fund used to finance projects throughout Central Europe and in the Baltic countries related to the Holocaust. Teacher-training, sponsoring high school essay contests and producing documentary films about the Holocaust are just a few of the types of projects the Task Force supports. The Task Force continues to be open to new ways of learning about the Holocaust and ideas to ensure that its important lessons are not forgotten.

The United States chaired the Holocaust Task Force this past year before turning over the reins in early March to Italy. One important new step the U.S. initiated during its Task Force Chair was to investigate the question of how best to teach the lessons of the Holocaust in multicultural settings. In France, for example, some Muslim students have refused to participate in classes devoted to studying the Holocaust and even have walked out. There are no easy answers to this predicament, but leading experts in the Task Force have now taken on this difficult question and we anticipate they will make progress in the months ahead.

When Ambassador O'Donnell testified before this committee in October, Mr. Chairman, you asked him about Holocaust education efforts in various countries in Europe. We tasked our Embassies to develop this information and provided it to the Committee in January. Now we have also sent the matrix with this information out to a number of NGOs to supplement from their own sources what we have learned in order to gather as complete a picture as possible. Once we have their responses we will share the updated information with the Committee.

Speaking Out

Secretary Powell has made clear that we must do everything we can to fight anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. I have instructed U.S. Ambassadors at our missions throughout Europe and Eurasia to be both vigilant and vocal in denouncing anti-Semitism in the countries where they serve. In Greece recently, a well-known composer used anti-Semitic terms to criticize Israeli policy. While acknowledging the composer's right to his political opinions, our Ambassador quickly and publicly criticized the composer's anti-Semitic terminology. We are similarly vigilant elsewhere in Europe and will continue to speak out against anti-Semitism and to work with our friends and partners to combat it wherever it appears.

Mr. Chairman, with that I will conclude my formal remarks. I would be pleased to take your questions.

Thank you.

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