

PC.DEL/345/04  
29 April 2004

ENGLISH  
Original: GERMAN

**WORDS OF GREETING ON THE OCCASION OF THE OSCE  
CONFERENCE ON THE SUBJECT OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE  
FROM DR. PAUL SPIEGEL, PRESIDENT OF THE CENTRAL  
COUNCIL OF JEWS IN GERMANY**

Berlin, 28 April 2004

The growing prevalence of anti-Semitism in Europe is at last being discussed by a wider public. The Jewish community in Germany has noted with satisfaction that the initiative leading to the present OSCE Conference on Anti-Semitism was taken by the German Minister for Foreign Affairs. This is also a welcome and important signal of solidarity with Jews throughout the world.

The Middle East conflict, which unfortunately continues to smoulder with undiminished intensity, and the continuing unstable situation in Iraq have further heightened the danger of new terrorist atrocities, like the recent one in Madrid. At the same time, an increase in acts of violence motivated by anti-Semitism and in verbal attacks and insults directed against Jews can be observed within the European community of States. These alarming facts call for extreme vigilance not only on the part of the security authorities but also of the population in many countries around the world.

The unavoidable concentration on Islamic terrorist attacks and acts of violence often has the result that anti-Semitic activities, assaults and abuse by skinheads and radical right-wing groups and individuals are frequently mentioned only in passing in the media and are barely noticed by the public. It must be clearly stated in this regard that one cannot speak of more dangerous and less dangerous anti-Semitism. Nor can certain forms of anti-Semitism be treated more tolerantly than others. Criticism of Israel with an anti-Semitic colour from supposed intellectuals is just as unacceptable as the inflammatory slogans of bawling right-wing extremists or violent, fanaticized Islamists. And the Islamist danger should not be given excessive emphasis. The fatal result would be an increase in anti-*Islamism* within the European Union (EU). The first signs of this are already evident. Such tendencies must be a matter of equal concern to us, because they threaten the peaceful coexistence of cultures, ethnic groups and religions in Europe.

Moreover, it makes no difference in the end from the point of view of the many victims of extremists — victims who usually receive little attention — whether the perpetrators of violent acts or the senders of threatening hate letters are Islamists or European right-wing radicals. Threats of violence, assaults, day-to-day discrimination and scrawled insults on overturned gravestones of relatives and friends are frightening and humiliating for any one, whatever his or her faith or origin. This is particularly so as every incident of this kind makes clear to us Jews that we are still threatened in Europe, or again threatened,

directly or indirectly, nearly 60 years after the end of the Holocaust. Not many people realize what it means to have to live with this sensation. One has the impression that, in the eyes of many non-Jews, subjection to a certain degree of threat is already a permanent feature of Jewish existence. This is a cynical view which has nothing to do with the experience of many Jews in Europe of a diminished feeling of security. We fear violence and suffer under discrimination like any one else. However, this fear does not paralyse us. We shall continue untiringly to denounce and strongly condemn anti-Semitic and radical right-wing tendencies.

With the entry of eight eastern European countries into the EU, due on 1 May 2004, the sufferings of these countries under communist and National Socialist occupation — something of which little is known in western Europe — will increasingly move into the consciousness of Europeans. Simultaneously, these States will be increasingly confronted with their history in regard to collaboration in crimes, particularly under National Socialist occupation — a history which they have only begun to deal with. For the expanded Europe, this will mean, in the future, tackling more intensively a traditional anti-Semitism which is still widespread in many eastern European countries. The combating of all forms of anti-Semitism in Europe may, as a result, become a more complicated, more difficult and more time-consuming process than has generally been assumed up to now. We should prepare ourselves for this in good time.

In the framework of this Conference, the phenomenon of European anti-Semitism will be thoroughly discussed from different perspectives and the attention of the public will be drawn to this subject. “At last”, I should like to add! An excellent result would be for the participants to succeed in setting in motion initiatives against right-wing and Islamic radicalism that transcend national boundaries and in agreeing on regular evaluations and follow-up meetings.

The message must go out from Berlin that the countries of Europe are united in the resolute proscription of all forms of anti-Semitism and racism. In this connection, I should like to take advantage of this forum to thank and commend all those men and women of goodwill who show solidarity with Jews everywhere in the world, who speak out firmly against anti-Semitism and who give us encouragement. I am speaking of private initiatives, organizations and honest men and women in a wide variety of functions who understand our fears and concerns, take a clear position and understand what anti-Semitism really is: a way of thinking that is contemptuous of human dignity and a danger for any democracy based on the rule of law.

I therefore appeal to the people of Europe: remember that you or your relatives could be the next victim! Do not allow yourselves to be intimidated, and firmly oppose every form of discrimination, right-wing radicalism and terrorism.