

## Bonn and Jewish group agree payout for East

02 January 1998

By REGINE WOSNITZA

Jewish groups this week welcomed a decision by the German government to pay compensation to Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe.

The decision follows years of negotiations between Bonn and the Jewish Claims Conference.

Talks between the two sides nearly collapsed in November as Bonn opposed making the regular monthly payments which survivors from Eastern Europe had sought.

Reports suggested that Bonn had since agreed to make three payments a year into a fund to be administered by the JCC, which would in turn make monthly payments to between 17,000 and 20,000 survivors.

Holocaust survivors who lived in the West after the war received substantial compensation from the German government. But those in the East were excluded because of cold war politics.

Germany has paid about 100 billion marks (£30 billion) to victims of Nazism, almost all of which went to survivors in the West.

Jewish groups insisted that East European victims should receive regular monthly payments, like their Western counterparts. Germany was opposed and offered to make only one-off payments.

A group of 83 US Senators backed the campaign for compensation in a letter to Chancellor Helmut Kohl in August.

Rabbi Andrew Baker, of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), described the result of the talks as satisfactory. "Our point of view was clear-cut all the time," he told the JC.

"The aim is to secure regular payment for the Holocaust survivors in Eastern Europe."

Since the end of the cold war, Germany has set funds aside for one-off payments of a maximum of 1,000 marks each to those in the east, compared to pensions of 500 marks per month in the west.

Many East Europeans say they have received no money, despite payments to their national governments by Bonn.

Survivors' outrage has been heightened by reports that Bonn has been paying pensions to thousands of people who were either war criminals or members of organisations branded as criminal by the Allies after the war.

One Berlin daily criticised the deal. "The Jews of Eastern Europe are being categorised as an anonymous group, as victims without a face and without a history," Tageszeitung said. "The JCC, as the representative of Jewish interests, may take care of individual fates, the republic spares itself this task and in a 'refined manner' remains in the background."