

to grasp the full enormity of the Holocaust. I urge Americans planning a visit to Washington to come here, themselves, and see what we have just seen.

History records many atrocities before and after the 1930s and 1940s. But it was the Holocaust that forced us to find a new term for horrors on such a scale—a crime against humanity. Human evil has never been so ambitious in scope, so systematic in execution, and so deliberate in its destruction.

In places like this, the evidence has been kept. Without it, we might forget the past, and we might neglect the future. And we must never forget. We must always remember both the cruelty of the guilty and the courage and innocence of their victims.

So many stories from the concentration camps will never be told because many of the witnesses did not survive. The stories we have must be preserved forever: Stories of mothers sacrificing themselves to save their children; stories of children trying to shield their parents; stories of men and women praying and comforting one another in the last moments on this Earth. These tell the greater truth of the Holocaust: The evil is real, but hope endures.

Above all, this museum is a testament to hope. Tomorrow I will have the honor of joining in the Days of Remembrance observances at the Capitol. I will convey America's commitment to the memory of 6 million who died in the Holocaust, our commitment to averting future tragedies, and our commitment to a friend, as a friend, to the Jewish people—to their cause and to the nation they built.

I hope to see many of you at the Capitol tomorrow.

Thank you all for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:50 p.m. in the Hall of Witness. In his remarks, he referred to Rabbi Irving Greenberg, chair, and Ruth B. Mandel, vice chair, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council; and Sara J. Bloomfield, director, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Remarks Announcing Support for the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

April 19, 2001

Thank you all for coming. Secretary Powell and Administrator Whitman and I are pleased to make an announcement on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. This international agreement would restrict the use of 12 dangerous chemicals—POPs, as they are known, or the “dirty dozen.” Negotiations were begun by the previous administration, and this treaty achieves a goal shared by this administration. I'm pleased to announce my support for the treaty and the intention of our Government to sign and submit it for approval by the United States Senate.

This convention is significant in several respects. First, concerns over the hazards of PCBs, DDT, and the other toxic chemicals covered by the agreement are based on solid scientific information. These pollutants are linked to developmental defects, cancer, and other grave problems in humans and animals. The risks are great, and the need for action is clear. We must work to eliminate, or at least to severely restrict, the release of these toxins without delay.

Second, this agreement addresses a global environmental problem. These chemicals respect no boundaries and can harm Americans even when released abroad.

Third, this treaty takes into account the understandable concerns of less-developed nations. When these chemicals are used they pose a health and environmental threat, no matter where in the world they're allowed to spread. But some nations with fewer resources have a harder time addressing these threats, and this treaty promises to lend them a hand.

And finally, this treaty shows the possibilities for cooperation among all parties to our environmental debates. Developed nations cooperated with less-developed nations. Businesses cooperated with environmental

groups. And now, a Republican administration will continue and complete the work of a Democratic administration.

This is the way environmental policy should work. And I want to thank the United States delegation and all who helped negotiate this important treaty. And after our remarks here, we would like to welcome you in the Oval Office so I can thank you personally.

Mr. Secretary.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:20 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Secretary of State Colin L. Powell and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman.

Remarks on the Observance of the National Days of Remembrance

April 19, 2001

Members of Congress, members of my Cabinet, Ambassador Ivry, Elie Wiesel, Benjamin Meed and other survivors, Rabbi Greenberg and Dr. Mandel, ladies and gentlemen: Laura and I thank you for asking us to join you on this Day of Remembrance.

Some days are set aside to recall the great and hopeful moments of human experience. Other days, like today, we turn our minds to painful events. In doing so, we honor the courage and suffering of martyrs and heroes. We also seek the wisdom and courage to prevent future tragedies and future evils.

World War II ended and camps were liberated before many of us were born. The events we recall today have the safe distance of history, and there will come a time when the eyewitnesses are gone. And that is why we are bound by conscience to remember what happened, and to whom it happened.

During the war, a Nazi guard told Simon Wiesenthal that in time no one would believe his account of what he saw. Evil on so grand a scale would seem incredible. Yet, we do not just believe; we know. We know because the evidence has been kept; the record has been preserved.

It is fitting to remember the Holocaust under the dome of our Nation's Capitol, with Members of the United States Congress who

are here. Some Members had relatives among the victims. Some of you played a part in the liberation of Europe. One Congressman here today fought in the underground, and he, himself, was put into forced labor by the Nazis. We are honored by the presence of the gentleman from California, Tom Lantos.

We remember at the Capitol because the United States has accepted a special role: We strive to be a refuge for the persecuted; we are called by history and by conscience to defend the oppressed; our country stands on watch for the rise of tyranny, and history's worst tyrants have always reserved a special hatred for the Jewish people. Tyrants and dictators will accept no other gods before them. They require disobedience to the First Commandment. They seek absolute control and are threatened by faith in God. They fear only the power they cannot possess, the power of truth.

So they resent the living example of the devout, especially the devotion of a unique people, chosen by God. Through centuries of struggle, Jews across the world have been witnesses not only against the crimes of men but for faith in God and God alone. Theirs is a story of defiance and oppression and patience and tribulation, reaching back to the Exodus and their exile. That story continued in the founding of the State of Israel. That story continues in the defense of the State of Israel.

When we remember the Holocaust and to whom it happened, we also must remember where it happened. It didn't happen in some remote or unfamiliar place; it happened right in the middle of the Western world. Trains carrying men, women, and children in cattle cars departed from Paris and Vienna, Frankfurt and Warsaw. And the orders came not from crude and uneducated men but from men who regarded themselves as cultured and well-schooled, modern, and even forward-looking. They had all the outward traits of cultured men, except for conscience.

Their crimes show the world that evil can slip in and blend in amid the most civilized of surroundings. In the end, only conscience