

Jewish Cemeteries Under Threat

The German government has come under attack from an Orthodox Jewish organisation for allowing a company to build a supermarket on the sight of a Hamburg cemetery. The *Assra Kadisha* organisation acts as a watchdog on Jewish cemeteries around the world. Recently, they organised an international delegation, led by a member of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations, London Councillor Mr Joe Lobenstein MBE, which held talks about the future of the Ot-tensen cemetery with the German Federal and State authorities.

A two hour discussion with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr Dieter Katrupp, resulted in tea and sympathy but precious little else, said the bitterly disappointed Mr Lobenstein. He accused the authorities of passing the buck saying that neither the state government nor the federal government was willing to accept responsibility. Both claim that neither has the power to interfere in a commercial transaction.

The case of the cemetery came to light about a year ago when it was acquired by the company *Bull and Liedke*. The cemetery, in which 4,000 Jews are buried, was sold by the Hamburg Jewish community with the consent of the German Jewish Trust Corporation, but Mr Lobenstein's delegation dispute the authority of the sale.

One is naturally reminded of our own "Westminster cemeteries scandal," in which three cemeteries were sold off for 15p. There is no suggestion of dodgy dealings here, but Mr Lobenstein, who emigrated from Germany before the Second World War, claimed that this sale was both tactless and deeply offensive to the Orthodox community.

Supporters are urged to contact the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations on 081-802 6226.