

CD-1088 Transcription

Address at 92nd Street YMHA on John Paul II and the Jews [1].

20 October 1987.

Cathy Behrend:

Good evening. My name is Cathy Behrend. As a member of the board of the New York Chapter of the American Jewish Committee and the 92nd Street YMHA, I welcome you to the Y and to tonight's program. It is a particular pleasure for me to introduce an event which brings together both the AJC and the Y. Both institutions are highly respected and dynamic agencies. They are both established on some of the same fundamental values. Of particular note is their shared dedication to a pluralistic exploration of ideas. Before introducing our speaker, I would like to recognize Bob Glick, who is the Director of Education at the 92nd Street Y. Bob? And in the back of the room, Haskell Lazere, the Executive Director of [01:00] the New York Chapter of the American Jewish Committee. And [Sadie Olivieri?], the Director of Membership for the New York Chapter. For those of you who are new to the American Jewish Committee, you are about to meet one of the greatest assets of the Committee, and one of the most listened to voices in the Jewish and the non-Jewish community. Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum is the director of AJC's Department of International Relations. He is one of the leading

experts on interreligious activities, intergroup activities, and human rights issues. As we will learn tonight, he has played a key role in recent Catholic-Jewish relations, as well as important events in the 1960s. Rabbi Tanenbaum was the only rabbi at Vatican Council II. Besides interreligious affairs, he has been a major leader on world refugee problems as well [02:00]. Tonight, Marc Tanenbaum will offer us a firsthand, up-to-date, insider's report on Pope Paul II, the Jews, and Israel. He will present his comments, and then there will be a question-and-answer period. The ushers have been you some three-by-five cards. During Rabbi Tanenbaum's presentation, please fill them out, and they will be collected during the presentation. It is now an honor and a pleasure to introduce to the New York Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, Dr. and Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum.

Marc Tanenbaum:

I always find some charm when a chairperson [03:00] -- I got that right, didn't I, chairperson -- fumbles over the introduction with Rabbi, Doctor, Mister, Marc. Especially over the Rabbi-Doctor business. Because I recall when I was a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary, it got to be very fashionable for rabbis to identify themselves publicly as Doctor. It became, in fact, almost obsessive, mainly because Protestant ministers frequently referred to themselves as the

Reverend Doctor. So rabbis began following the practice, and you would see in the *New York Times*, on the socials as "Rabbi Doctor marries so-and-so." We had a very great chancellor, a very important scholar in Judaism, Rabbi Finkelstein, who had a real sense of authentic Jewish tradition. And he one day said to our class, "You know, Judaism did not begin feeling sick until rabbis started becoming doctors." [04:00]

I want to say, I hope it is not understood to be either defensive or apologetic, that I'm quite impressed by the number of people who have turned out tonight, considering the fact that several weeks ago, when it began to be announced that I was going to give a talk tonight about the whole turmoil that took place in relation to the meeting with Pope John Paul II in Rome, and subsequently in Miami, that word came back to the American Jewish Committee that the Jewish Defense Organization [05:00] was prepared to carry out a major demonstration at the 92nd Street Y if I were to give a report on, as they called it, "that obscenity" of the audience of nine Jewish leaders with the pope and with Vatican authorities. Some of our public relations people were becoming a little bit queasy about provoking the JDO, and so a decision was made not to send out any advance publicity about this meeting tonight. So we happy few are here. I frankly think it's a mistake to capitulate to extremists,

under any circumstances. And I wanted to say that because
[06:00] I've had other occasions where those kinds of things
have taken place and I simply think that it is the hallmark of
responsibility of leadership not to allow that kind of
intimidation to go on. I guess I cannot begin this evening by
saying something about the context in which we are come together
tonight. It's a little warm; I hope the air conditioning begins
working here.

Given the fact of what's been happening with the market this
week, I think maybe an appropriate cultural context for
discussing another kind of upheaval. I heard someone today say
that he heard one broker on Wall Street this morning coming over
to another broker and asking him, "You want to go into
partnership with me?" And the other [07:00] broker said, "I
guess so." He said, "OK, let's hold hands and jump out the
window together." I guess something, at some point,
appropriately when there's time, one ought to pay some attention
to the general cultural, political environment in which we find
ourselves, which tends to an extraordinary kind of expressivism.
Extremism. An immoderation. Because I think that one must take
that into account as one tries to examine what happened during
these extraordinary months of June, July, August, September,
through which we have passed in relation to this issue.

I have been involved [08:00] in working in Jewish life -- I don't know whether it's longer than my colleague Haskell Lazere, but certainly close to the period of time that he has been serving -- I've been with the American Jewish Committee now for 26 years. Prior to that, I served after some detour at *Time* Magazine and some other things that I did -- served for 10 years as the executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, representing all of the branches of Jewish religious life in this country. I can seldom recall a time or an issue in which so much anger, even rage, became publicly manifest, first in the Jewish community, and side by side with that, which is unknown to many [09:00] in the Jewish community, an analogous anger and rage in the Roman Catholic community, over the issue of Pope John Paul II agreeing to receive Dr. Kurt Waldheim, the unrepentant Nazi who became president of Austria on June 25th of this year. Enough time has passed to be able to try to look at that event, because that became the turning point event, in this whole relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jewish people in recent years. And I tried to examine for myself, with some measure of objectivity to the degree that that becomes possible when one is involved in this effort over so many years. And it suddenly struck me one day, as I looked at a photograph [10:00] of the pope and Waldheim, of why it was that

so much passion, so much anger, became manifest, first in the Jewish community and then in the Roman Catholic community. And it struck me that here in this one symbol of the pope and Waldheim, there came together the two images which have been the overpowering images in Jewish consciousness. Not only in recent history, but throughout 2,000 years of the Jewish historic experience. Waldheim became, by virtue of the incessant publicity focusing on him in his campaign for the presidency and becoming president of Austria, Waldheim became the symbolic embodiment of Nazism and of the Nazi war machine, of the Final Solution for the Jewish people. [11:00] There were very few other Nazis around to be talked about. Linnaeus was sent off. The Demjanjuk trial was going on. Mengele was finished. Waldheim became the clear and present representation of Nazism in Jewish consciousness.

And Pope John Paul II became the embodiment prior to the issuance of the Vatican Council declaration *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican declaration which in 1965 repudiated anti-Semitism, repudiated the Christ-killer charge, said that anti-Semitism by anyone at any time, anywhere, was rejected by the Church. That's a very recent memory for Jews. That's an altogether radically new experience for Jews and their understanding of their relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. Most Jews understand

the Roman Catholic [12:00] Church and the Vatican and popes in terms of the history of the past 1,900 years, and the Jewish experience in the Christian West, from the beginning of the first four centuries, had been a period overwhelmingly of anti-Semitism, of teaching of contempt, of pogroms, of inquisitions, of auto-da-fés, of yellow badges.

There is a very great Jewish scholar by the name of Professor Salo Baron, whom I'm sure is known to many of you, who has devoted his life now to writing. He's up to I think volume 19 of the social and cultural history of the Jewish people. And Baron has examined the Jewish historic experience of the past, literally 4,000 years, but especially in the concentration on the experience of the Jews since the Roman conquest of Palestine [13:00] of the first century. And he came to the conclusion, doing a very careful examination, with statistical method, that had the Jews been allowed to live a normal life in ancient Palestine, had they not been oppressed by the Romans and driven out of Palestine, had Jerusalem not been destroyed, and several hundred thousand Jews been killed at that time, and Jews cast into the Western world, there to experience the tragedies, triumphs, but mainly tragedies of anti-Semitism, of oppression, et cetera. Jews been allowed to live a normal life as any other people living on its land, reproducing in normal ways, there

would be living today in this year of 1987, roughly about 150 million Jewish people.

If you look in the American Jewish Yearbook, [14:00] you will find that there are 14 million Jews alive today in the world. That is the price that Jews have paid for hatred, for Christ-killer charges, for wandering Jews, for those classic teachings of anti-Semitism which began religiously with the image of Jews as Judas, and became culturally transformed to the image of Jews as Shylock, people not to be trusted. People who deserve their ghettos and all of their isolation. Well all of that imagery, especially to Jews who have had no experience whatsoever with what has gone on with the Roman Catholic Church since *Nostra Aetate*, since the adoption of the Vatican Council declaration, who've only read bits and pieces of it in the newspapers, seen a clipping somewhere, a photograph somewhere. To those Jews, and that incidentally is a point I want to get at later on, in terms of the reaction to these events. [15:00]

There is a dividing line in the Jewish community between Jews who have been involved during the past 22 years since Vatican Council II, intensive involvement with the Roman Catholic Church, and with other churches as well. We have friends at the Greek Orthodox Church here tonight. Intensive involvement with

Greek Orthodox, mainline Protestants, even Evangelical Christians. If Jews knew that Billy Graham was among the best friends of the Jewish people with regard to Israel, and Soviet Jewry, and other causes, they would never believe it. It doesn't fit with our conventional imagery. But those who have been involved in that experience, who have seen the transformation that has taken place in the past 20 years, had an almost totally different reaction to what was going on in relation to the pope and the Vatican, and Miami, than those who've had no experiences whatsoever. And who were in fact reenacting the rage, almost the sleeper rage, of accumulated [16:00] 1,900 years of resentment at what has happened to our people, and the terrible prices we have paid in blood and lives over that period of time. So what I'm trying to suggest is that the very image of Waldheim the Nazi, the pope as the embodiment of 1,900 years of teaching of contempt, came together synergistically and took on a life and a volatility much beyond the reality of what in fact was going on, which may have called for an altogether calmer, more analytic, more rational response than was able to take place. And what is not known in the Jewish community is while Jews became increasingly furious over the fact that here the pope, the Vicar of Christ on Earth, was prepared to receive this unrepentant Nazi who lied about his Nazi past for 40 years, who while he was the head of the United Nations, [17:00] the secretary general of

the United Nations, literally deceived all of his colleagues at the United Nations for a period of 10 years.

Not incidentally, I suggest you look at a book review in the *New York Times* two weeks ago by Sir Brian Urquhart, who was number one aide to the five secretary generals. And he describes in detail his experience with every one of the secretary generals of the UN. And Urquhart, apparently without any reservation, declares that Dr. Kurt Waldheim was the most contemptuous, contemptible of all the secretary generals he worked with, and quoted in the *New York Times* as saying, "He was a living lie who lied about everything to his colleagues at the United Nations." Who had complete contempt for the man.

So while the Jewish community, I think by and large, and we saw this in much of the press, and much of the statements that were made [18:00] were reacting to the fact that the pope as the Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church was prepared to receive this man Kurt Waldheim, to the vast majority of Roman Catholics whom I came into contact with, and looking at the surveys. *Newsday* had a survey, and the *New York Times* had a survey. And then we had conversations with Cardinal O'Connor and Archbishop May and Bishop [Keillor?], and many others. To Roman Catholics, they could not understand the Jewish reaction. Why are

the Jews attacking our pope? The Vicar of Christ on Earth? And Catholics began saying that this is another crucifixion. In fact, the vice mayor of one of the cities in Austria, a man by the name of Hodel, wrote a bitter letter to Edgar Bronfman, in which he attacked Bronfman for attacking Waldheim, saying that this is what the Jews do. They engage in crucifixion, as they did in the past.

So two radically opposite perceptions were developing in the community, [19:00] and the gap became very great, and the hostility became deepened. And the absence of any real communication led to the possibilities of very real and very genuine conflict between not just Rome and the Vatican, but between 52 million Catholics in the United States, and some six million Jews in this country. The issue was that real and that serious.

Now, let me say one more word before I get into some of the details of what went on in Rome, Castel Gandolfo, and some of the implications since that time. There is another complexity, apart from the question of historic perceptions. The consciousness, the baggage, that both communities carry in their own heads. One of them idealizing the pope, the other seeing the pope as the expression of this long tradition of the past 1,900 years. There is the complexity of the very nature of the pope's role himself. Now, William Safire said it in his usually [20:00] impudent way, and I like Bill Safire but it was an impudent statement, he said

of course popes wear two hats. One's a religious hat and the other's a political hat. And in fact, that also is part of the complexity in trying to understand what was going on. The pope is at one and the same time filled with ambiguity by virtue of both of those roles. On the one hand, he is the universal pastor of not only 52 million Catholics in America, but of 850 million Roman Catholics throughout the world. As the universal pastor and confessor of sins for many of the Roman Catholic Church, he is regarded as being infallible on issues of faith, morals, and discipline. That is, when the pope pronounces himself on faith, morals, and discipline, that is regarded as the rule of law for Roman Catholics [21:00] around the world. Yet at the same time, he is also the Supreme Pontiff, the *Pontifex Maximus*. He is the Supreme Pontiff of the sovereign state of Vatican City, which was established in 1929 by virtue of the Lateran Pact with Mussolini, as a sovereign state. And he is regarded as the political head of state. Now, even in Catholic doctrine, the political head of state is not infallible on politics. And yet, the irony is that Roman Catholics have tended to fudge that distinction of infallibility. The pope is infallible in faith and morals, and somehow he can do no wrong even in politics. And if I were to show you the sheaf of letters, and telegrams, and hate calls that came from Catholics, saying "Who in the hell are you Jews to tell our pope whom he can meet with? He can meet with anybody he wants to. He's our infallible pastor." Which is to say, the infallibility of morals, which ought to [22:00] remain intact solely for religion, began to spill over to politics as well, as

if one is infallible in politics as well. And somehow, Jews have bought that in their reaction to this; namely, Jews have felt that if he is in fact infallible, as you believe him to be, why doesn't he behave infallibly in politics as well? So how could he receive a Nazi? So all of that, I think, deep emotionalism, that complexity, was going on throughout the whole period of this debate, beginning with his receiving Waldheim on June 25th.

Now let me get down to some of the reality of what we're dealing with. And I need to be, for myself, as honest and realistic, and not play propaganda games for anybody, if one wants to understand what we're dealing with. Jews need to know the pope did not ask for the audience with Waldheim. [23:00] Waldheim personally asked for an audience on three separate occasions with the pope. He was turned down by the Holy See, by the Vatican Secretary of State. I guess that's a signal for me. So he did not ask for an audience. The pope did not ask for the audience with Waldheim; Waldheim was turned down three times by the Holy See. The demand for the audience for Waldheim -- and it's important to understand this in terms of the unfolding relationship with Austria, in this post-Papal period -- the request for an audience with the pope grew out of the domestic politics of Austria. The Social Democratic Party in Austria, which had ruled in Austria for some 16 years, began, by virtue of having lost the last election to the conservative People's Party, [24:00] the Social Democratic Party began to attack the People's Party for having brought shame and humiliation on Austria by virtue of having elected this

unrepentant Nazi to become president of the country. And the People's Party, in order to break this attack against them, had to find a way to break out of their isolation, because Austria was becoming isolated by everybody. The United States government, when they put them on the watch list, sent a trauma through the whole of Austrian body politic. So they began to look desperately to try to pull Waldheim out of his corner; to pull Austria out of its isolation. And so the Austrian government then went to the Vatican, and demanded that the Holy See grant an audience to Waldheim as the president of Austria, who is democratically elected. And they did it on the basis that the Vatican itself had declared that if any head of state requests an audience with the pope, and [25:00] he's a democratically elected head of state, the pope is obligated to receive him. And then the Austrian government, through its Foreign Ministry, made such a demand. And the Holy See responded and provided for that audience. So almost on technical grounds one could say that the pope himself was boxed in to have to receive Waldheim, although that in fact is not the case. But at least formally, legalistically, the Vatican could make that case. But even having done so, the critical moral question is, having agreed to receive Waldheim, it is morally and politically incomprehensible that in receiving him, the pope did not say a single word about his Nazi past, about the Nazi Holocaust, about his involvement in Nazism, or Austria's involvement in Nazism. Not only did he not do that, but he in fact allowed Waldheim to hijack the pope, and to hijack the Vatican for his purposes. Because then, [26:00] Waldheim said

that the pope, the conscience of mankind has received me. It was a wonderful audience. It went beyond anything that I expected. And in all of the Austrian newspapers, you had those smiling pictures with that caption, "Pope Receives Waldheim," as if that was the papal blessing for his presidency, without saying a single word. And for us, and part of the reason for the anger -- and this was rational anger, not irrational anger -- is that the message that emerged out of that experience of receiving Waldheim, and not making a single reference to his Nazi past, Austria's involvement in the Nazi past, a message clearly went out to millions of young Catholics in Germany, in Austria, in Poland, and elsewhere, that apparently to this pope, the Nazi Holocaust has become irrelevant. So unimportant that it wasn't even worth a mention when he received [27:00] this unrepentant Nazi in the halls of the Apostolic Palace.

Now I know how real an issue that is, because the American Jewish Committee has for the past 20 some years been involved in programs, working with young Germans who are determined to face the past. We have exchange programs bringing literally thousands of young Germans, many young German Catholics, German Protestants, to the United States to see Jewish institutions, Jewish life, Jewish culture. And they're transformed by that experience, and go back determined to face the Nazi past, to learn lessons from it, to learn how it was possible for that demonic regime to take over, the Weimar regime, and make it this bestial experience that it was for Germany and for the rest of

mankind. And we're now engaged in a program in Austria. Two-thirds of Austria was born either during the war or after the war. That is to say, the majority of the population in Austria today, which [28:00] is overwhelmingly Catholic, 87% Catholic, are young Austrian Catholics, many of whom have told us -- we sat in the mayor's office with the deputy young mayor, a man who was in his early forties, who said, "We are ashamed of the silence that Austria has engaged in during the past 40 years. Denying, repressing its involvement in the Nazi past. We are determined to break that silence and learn from that on how to support constitutional democracy, civil and political liberties, and human rights." These young people need encouragement, need confirmation, need enforcement. And for them, suddenly to be told that you can be a Nazi involved in Group E, involved in the Nazi enterprise, and somehow it doesn't mean anything. I'm not talking here about the question of the nature of Waldheim's guilt, which is a subject which needs to be examined in itself, but the fact that he was a member of the Nazi party, and was a lieutenant in a Nazi [29:00] Group E, and participated in events. Not even to refer to that, not even to raise that as a question of conscience, becomes a devastating message to these young German, Austrian, Polish Catholics, among others, who need to look to their moral guide for encouragement to deal with this issue.

Well, with that as background, and those as elements, which contributed to the anger that was felt so widely in the Jewish community, including Jewish leadership, we found that it became

necessary for us to make clear our radical unhappiness. And then, when we began to look at our relationship [30:00] with the Vatican, and the fact that they were planning for the audience with the pope on September 11th in Miami, we made it clear to the Vatican that unless there was some explanation, some clarification, on how this morally incomprehensible act could take place, there was no possibility of a meeting taking place in Miami. That all of us, Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, all range of Jewish life, all major Jewish organizations, would not come to Miami in the face of this event. This became a deeply upsetting issue for the American Catholic hierarchy. And all the cardinals, the archbishops, had a series of meetings over a period of time. And while it was not known publicly, they were extraordinary in their identification of the Jewish cause. Not only privately, but even publicly, [31:00] Archbishop John May, the president of the Catholic Bishops Conference, made a statement saying that American Jewish leaders are justified in their anger, and that the Vatican owes it to them, owes it to itself, that their request for clarification takes place. Which is a statement about the autonomy and the strength of the American Catholic leadership on a great many issues. On July 8th, the evening before, on a Wednesday night, I received a telephone call from someone in Cardinal O'Connor's office, saying that Cardinal Casaroli, the number two man in the Vatican, the Vatican Secretary of State, in a sense, the equivalent of Secretary George Shultz in the Vatican -- should anything happen to the pope, Cardinal Casaroli would become the de facto pope in the Holy See -- that Cardinal

Casaroli was in the city. He had come [32:00] in fact for an unofficial visit, and even there, there was a lot of distortion. One of the great problems I've had to deal with are the misrepresentations and disinformation that was going on. People said that Casaroli was dispatched by the pope to run to the United States to make peace with the Jews before Miami. Casaroli in fact had come to the United States on an unofficial visit; it was not known by most of the hierarchy, except a few people in the New York area, to join in the dedication of a hospital, where the year before they had taken care of him when he had broken a hip. So he was in the city, and he was getting ready to go back to Rome the next day. He had a meeting here in New York with Cardinal O'Connor; with Archbishop John May, the president of the Catholic hierarchy; with Bishop [Keillor?], who was in charge of organizing the whole visit of the pope in the United States; Monsignor Hoy, the Executive Secretary of the Catholic Hierarchy, among others. And during their conversation with Casaroli, we were told, the American [33:00] hierarchy who met with him said to him, "You cannot leave the United States without meeting with Jewish leadership, and hearing from them the depth of their anger and offense at what had happened at that audience between the pope and Kurt Waldheim." So that night, I received a call, as did three other colleagues. We were told that Cardinal Casaroli was scheduled to go back to Rome the next morning, had changed his schedule, and he was prepared to meet with us the following morning at ten o'clock. Three of my colleagues, Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, who became the spokesman later in Miami; Rabbi Gilbert

Klaperman, a wonderful Orthodox rabbi who went through his own proud crucifixion, which I'll tell you about later on; Rabbi Wolfe Kelman and myself met with Cardinal Casaroli in the office of the papal delegate to the United Nations. Cardinal Casaroli has systematically avoided meeting with Jewish leaders, frankly, with Protestant leaders as well. His responsibility is primarily geopolitical. [34:00] And he doesn't get involved in ecumenical things. He also does not want to mix religion and politics, because he knows if he meets with us, he'll have to deal with the questions of Israel and the Nazi Holocaust, and many other issues. So for years he has succeeded in avoiding meeting with many Protestant and many Jewish leaders. Probably Greek Orthodox as well. The American Catholic hierarchy literally demanded that he change his pattern and to meet with us. We met with him the following morning. We met for an hour and a half. It was probably among the most forceful exchanges that he probably has had with anyone, probably even with the Soviet Union. It was civilized; it was responsible; it was moderate, but it was as forceful as it could have been. And without our orchestrating our language, and the themes, we confronted him on the Waldheim business. [35:00] We confronted him on the business of revisionism of the Nazi Holocaust that is now beginning to go on in parts of the Catholic Church. We confronted him on the issue of diplomatic relations with Israel. And there were responses to all of these things; I'll come to them in a few moments. When we finished we said, "There will be no meeting in Miami between Jewish leaders and the pope, unless there is a conversation with him about these issues

in Rome before he comes here." And Casaroli heard the music as well as heard the message. And he said, "These are important ideas. I will go back and talk them over with my boss, and you will hear from me." And so he left. And within 10 days, we received a call from the Vatican saying that the pope had agreed to our terms. He was prepared to interrupt [36:00] his vacation in Castel Gandolfo, which I don't want to make too much of if, but it is of some significance, especially in the Vatican, which places so much attention on symbolism and gestures. The pope hardly sees anybody at Castel Gandolfo, including cardinals and bishops, unless there's some unusual circumstance. He changed his schedule to meet with our delegation. Then on the Friday after that first call from Cardinal Willebrands, I got a call from Monsignor Duprey, who was the executive in charge of Christian unity, and then also Catholic-Jewish relations, who called me from the Vatican and said, "I have just spoken to the Holy Father. He wants a meeting, and he is prepared to meet with your delegation, on September the 1st in Castel Gandolfo. He does not want speeches. It is not to be a ceremonial meeting. He wants discussion, real discussion. [37:00] And there are no limits to what is to be discussed." He also said that the pope would prefer if the delegation to be limited to five people, so there could be real conversation. And not debates across the room with a convention. Well we came back to the Jewish delegation that's been meeting throughout the summer, the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultation, which includes the American Jewish Committee, Synagogue Council of America, the

World Jewish Congress, and B'nai B'rith International, and the Israel Interfaith Committee. We invited also other groups from the Synagogue Council, which included the Orthodox, Conservative, Reform movements. And then the American Jewish Congress came to the meeting, even though they were not part of the group, we wanted to be broadly representative. And the Anti-Defamation League, which had pulled out of IJCIC two years before to run its own program in Rome, also asked to come back into the discussion. So we came back, and we announced [38:00] that this was the message that we got from Rome. And that it is clear that there is a serious effort to meet the needs and the issues that we want to raise. In the right wing, traditional Catholic press, that announcement, that the pope was prepared to receive our delegation, was headlined, "Pope Surrenders to the Jews." The fact that the pope had agreed to meet the delegation in Castel Gandolfo, to change the whole pattern of Papal audiences -- he almost never has these kinds of conversations, in a sense of peer-to-peer -- was perceived of in that right wing element of the Catholic Church, traditional church, as a sellout, and that the Jews, by their pressure, had forced the pope into an indignity. When we came back to the Jewish community, we reported on the fact of these agreements we had with the Vatican. And [39:00] I got to tell you the way it was. We said that the pope has agreed for real conversation he would prefer five people, sitting around a table, for intimate conversation. Immediately the Jewish delegations, when they heard there was going to be an audience with the pope in Castel Gandolfo, and they saw all the

photo opportunities flaring up, suddenly there became a demand, we want nine people to go, we want 10 people to go, we want 12 people to go. We've got real problems with the Vatican. We've got real problems with our own Jewish community, in terms of responsible reaction to these kinds of situations. Any event, as it finally turned out, we ended up with a delegation of nine people. And fortunately, it included some of the most experienced people who had been working in Vatican-Jewish relations over the past 15-20 years, [40:00] and some very knowledgeable people in the field. Now, we went to Rome. And contrary to the versions that appeared in the press -- and it's astounding to read in the *Anglo-Jewish Press*, to read in the *Algemeiner Journal*, the Yiddish press, or the Jewish press -- what went on in Rome. People who were not there, people who had no idea what went on in any of those conversations, people who did not talk to anybody who was there, came to the conclusions that it was a disaster; it was a failure. And in fact, one of my colleagues, a Conservative Rabbi, he was a classmate of mine in Baltimore -- two weeks ago in the *Baltimore Jewish Times* said a statement that going to Rome was a criminal action on the part of the nine Jewish leaders who went. You'll forgive me; I am indulging myself. This is my abreaction; it'll save me \$75 [41:00] with my psychiatrist. Shouldn't be a total waste. But I say that because it is one of the issues to deal with. It is not just a matter of saying, the Catholics, the pope, the Vatican. We've got to be honest with ourselves, in terms of our own self-conceptions. Our own sense of responsibility, how we relate to one another. Any case, we came

to Rome on August the 31st. What happened on that day, we met with Cardinal Willebrands and nine members of the Vatican, because we had nine members. By virtue of all of those pro forma arrangements, they had to have nine members. And of course I think that was altogether appropriate, in that game of charades. And they brought in people not only from the Vatican Secretariat on Catholic-Jewish Relations, but the Vatican Secretariat of State, and the Vatican Secretariat of Justice and Peace. They brought in the person [42:00] in charge -- Monsignor Gatti -- of the Middle East desk to sit with us. We sat together for more than eight and a half hours during that day. Not incidentally, we broke for lunch, and we had a charming moment when we broke for lunch and went across the street to the Hotel Colombo, an old Knights of Templar hotel that was converted now into a general hotel. And the Vatican, as a sign of outreach to the Jewish delegation, arranged for kosher meals to be served in the Knights of Templar hotel. Not only kosher, but *glatt* kosher. And to show you how charming Catholic-Jewish relations can become in the twentieth century, with all of that irenic outreach, they suddenly bring in this *glatt* kosher food to the meeting, and the dishes, each of them has a cross of the Knight of Templar, with *glatt* kosher food being served on it. [43:00] So I turned to Cardinal Willebrands, I said, "I don't know what to do. What kind of *bracha* do you make over the Knights of Templars?" Nice moment. But we spent eight and a half hours in the Vatican City itself, and the office of Cardinal Willebrands. And it was the most serious, intense engagement on all of the issues that were of

concern to us. We got into the question of Waldheim, and all of the things I've said about the danger of that misunderstanding emerging out of the pope audience, we laid on the table forcefully. Somewhere along the way, Cardinal Willebrands, squirming, said to us in a way that would not somehow embarrass the pope and Casaroli; he said there what he later was to repeat in Miami, "There were mistakes made; even faux pas made." [44:00] That's about as far as the Vatican was prepared to go to say that they had made mistakes on the Waldheim episode. But we got into what, for me, was the crucial issue. Namely, how is the Vatican dealing with the issue of the Nazi Holocaust? Because what began to develop -- and here I've got to take moment to elaborate this, because it is of critical significance for future generations -- one of the major issues we face today, just in terms of intellectual integrity, is a growing movement of historic revisionism. It begins first with Nazis in Germany and neo-Nazis in the United States, who now have started a whole school of literature, the *Journal of Historic Review*, published in California, now with chapters around the country, with professors at Northwestern University giving courses saying that the Nazi Holocaust is a hoax. It never happened. It was invented [45:00] by the Jews. Now Le Pen in France says the death camps were a footnote to history. They were really not significant. And now there are neo-Nazis who are declaring that the Jews invented the mythology of the murder of six million Jews and the death camps, and the concentration camps, as a way of manipulating Christian guilt. And little by little, they're trying to unmake the Nazi

tragedy, in order to relieve the Christian world of any sense of guilt or responsibility. More responsibility than guilt, that's what Jews are concerned about.

END OF AUDIO FILE