

CD-1090 Transcription

Address at 92nd Street YMHA on John Paul II and the Jews [3].

20 October 1987.

Marc Tanenbaum:

-- who would not more give up the Passion Play and this imagery of Jews with long nose. That's a part of their faith. They were raised on their mother's milk. To finally -- for the Church to reject all of that, first in policy in the Vatican declaration, then specific instructions, "This cannot be taught again." It's nothing short of a revolution in human consciousness in the 20-something years. Well it will take us more than 20 years to unpack what has accumulated in 1,900 years. It's very important, if you're going to do this work, not only to have patience, but to get a good night's sleep in advance.

Cathy Behrend:

I think this will be the last question. "Do you ever envision the Vatican participating in formal diplomatic relations with Israel, recognizing the State of Israel?"

Marc Tanenbaum:

I have a guarded "yes" to that. [1:00] I am now persuaded that -
- and I have been involved in very deep discussions with the

Israeli Foreign Ministry -- it will take a different strategy. It will not take the strategy of coming asking, begging, as if they're going to do us a favor. It'll be a strategy dealing with the realities of the situation. It will involve a strategy for Jews to become knowledgeable and caring. There is a real problem. Arab Muslims are threatening to kill Christians. Christians have as much right to be concerned about fellow Christians as Jews care about Jews in the Soviet Union, as we care about Jews in Ethiopia, and South Africa, and elsewhere. The question is to be realistic about the nature of that caring. And we are now persuaded that the Vatican has allowed itself -- some people have [2:00] welcomed it -- but some of their wiser people -- and I count Casaroli among them; I count this Pope among them. This Pope has said some very positive things about Israel that no other Pope has said; I could read you the text of his Apostolic letter *Redemptionis Anno*, talks about the importance of Israel as he understands it; what it has meant to the Jewish people across the centuries. The city of Jerusalem, built by David and Solomon, which has been the object of prayer of Jews across the centuries. No Pope has said that with such feeling. I think he understands that. I think because of the Nazi past, he also understands what it means to Jews to have a haven. But I think he's also equally concerned about the fate of the Palestinians. We have to find a way -- and it's going to

take working with the United States government, and West European governments -- to put an end to this tragedy of Arab Muslim extremists using the Christians in their population as hostages to prevent the Vatican [3:00] from doing the rational, decent thing of establishing diplomatic relations with the only democracy in the Middle East. There are people in the Vatican who want to bring that about. Now there are American archbishops who are saying that -- Archbishop Weakland two weeks ago in Milwaukee issued a public statement saying the American Catholic hierarchy and the American Catholic Church want an end to this business of non-recognition, of non-diplomatic relations. And we're now calling on the Vatican to find ways appropriate to do this. But ways can be found to signal the Arab Muslim world what is happening to them in the Persian Gulf is now shaking up a lot of people in Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait, and Oman, and elsewhere. That they really are dependent on the United States to protect their survival against an expanding Iran. And that as that sinks into their consciousness, and the idiocies of the imagery of America as the great Satan begins to fall apart, and they see America [4:00] as their great savior, increasingly as that begins to move about in the Arab Muslim world, we may find some possibilities of moving in that direction. I have guarded optimism that with wisdom and with the right kinds of political understanding in that situation, that we together with the

government of Israel, which in the last analysis is the only authority which has the right, and the competence, and the skill to negotiate diplomatic relations, they are the direct actors. We're the supporting cast. But the supporting cast will be as helpful as we possibly can be to help create the conditions in which these relations can take place. But finally, in our heart of hearts we need to understand something. Israel has lived, has thrived now for 40 years, without the blessings [5:00] of the Vatican clergy. It has existed, it has become a sovereign democratic republic, without those diplomatic relations. Israel, God willing, can go on for another 400, 4,000 years, without those diplomatic relations. There's no reason for Israel to humble itself, coming hat in hand, asking for diplomatic ties. Truth of the matter is, I am increasingly persuaded that the Vatican needs diplomatic relations more than Israel requires it. And in time, I believe the better minds, wiser minds, in the Holy See will come to that determination. And we'll be glad to help them move across that threshold. Thank you.

BEHREND: [6:00] Thank you, Rabbi Tanenbaum, very, very, very much. And speaking of wisdom, political savvy, and eloquence, I think we got all of that tonight. And maybe afterwards, as Rabbi Tanenbaum comes --

F1: -- (inaudible) cards, you should not read (inaudible) very
bad --

BEHREND: OK, it's ten o'clock and it's the end of the program.

F1: You should take questions directly the audience, not through
you --

TANENBAUM: There are different styles of doing things --

F: OK, different styles. Thank you very much for attending.

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