CD-1109 Transcription

WINS radio commentaries. 1970-1987.

M: -- commentary by Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American

Jewish Committee.

MARC TANENBAUM: During the last week of August, a delegation

of six American Jewish Committee leaders went on a fact-

finding mission to Austria. It was the first Jewish group

to visit Vienna since the turbulent and distressing

presidential election of Dr. Kurt Waldheim. After

consultation with leaders of the Austrian Jewish Community,

the AJC spent a week of intensive meetings with the

chancellor, the foreign minister, leaders of both political

parties, social scientists specializing in research on

anti-Semitism, and educators engaged in anti-Fascist

education projects. We held four separate meetings with

Austrian-Jewish leaders, as one of a richly informative

briefing with the American Ambassador and his able staff.

At the risk of distortion, and trying to summarize such an

emotional complex experience in a phrase, I would have to

say something like this: Austria has many and deep

problems, and facing up honestly puts a long [01:00]

history of Anti-Semitism, and its involvement in the Nazi

horrors. But there are signs of genuine hope, especially

among its younger generation, many of whom we found are determined to face the past, and to learn the right lessons from it. Perhaps, the most hopeful sign of all is the decision of Austrian authorities to set up a joint working group with us to study in-depth the Anti-Semitism in Austria and to develop effective methods for combating that ancient evil. We welcome that cooperation, and our pledge to make it work for the sake of Austrian jury, as well as for the future of Austrian democracy, in which all of us have a stake. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee.

M: The preceding was a commentary, and the views expressed are not necessarily the views of WINS. WINS news time, 12:59.

(break in audio)

M: This is WINS Religion Commentary for January 4th, 1970, [02:00] entitled, "A Jewish View of the New Year's Day." Three, two, one. In an issue last week of a Yiddish newspaper published in New York, *The Jewish Day Morning Journal*, a correspondent inquired of a learned rabbinic columnist, whether it is permissible for a religious Jew to celebrate the secular New Year's Day. The columnist answered that it is prohibited, and for these reasons.

First, New Year's Day derives from the Pagan traditions

linked with the Roman idol Janus, and second, the

ceremonies which have come to be associated with New Year's

Day are marked by elaborate drunkenness, and frequently by

orgiastic behavior, which are not in keeping with the

traditional moral and ethical spirit of Judaism. If one

examines the origins of these New Year Day observances, and

the caricature of them that has developed in modern times,

one can better understand the moral reservations of the

rabbinic scholar, and indeed, [03:00] why the early church

opposed many of these practices. The primitive and archaic

cultures, as the historian [Merci Aleotti?] has pointed

out, the religious man had no conception of the continuity

of time. He regarded time as a series of leases, annually

or periodically renewed by the gods, time of the past year

was profane time, it was destructive time, because it wore

out man, society, and the cosmos. And it had to be

abolished through orgiastic rituals that signified a sort

of end of the world. On the last day of the year, primitive

man symbolically participated in the annihilation of the

world, and then set about to recreate it, thereby, creating

himself anew. But Judaism, and its struggle against these

Pagan conceptions took the problem of time and history

seriously. For Judaism, time is not a circle, forever

turning on itself, it has a beginning, and/or has an end.

The blowing of the *shofar*, the ram's horn, that supreme

Jewish answer to the Pagan noisemaker, [04:00] far from

signifying regression into chaos, recall the giving of the

Covenant at Sinai, which meant the intervention of the

divine presence in history. And therefore, the possibility

of history being sanctified. The blast of the *shofar* also

signified looking forward to the future, when the last

trumpet call will mark the Messianic redemption of man.

Whether these reflections make any difference to either Jew

or Christian, recovering from hangovers and indigestion on

the Sunday morning after New Year's Day, is in itself,

worthy of philosophic reflection.

M: Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee.

TANENBAUM: Twenty years ago this week, some 4,000 Libyan

Jews were forced to flee their Arab homeland, a country

which their ancestors had lived in for more than 2,000

years. The cause for their flight in 1967 was the Six Day

War in the Middle East. Because Israel had defeated the

five Arab nations who tried to destroy the Jewish state,

the [05:00] Libyan government and other Arab nations made

scapegoats of their Jewish populations, and inflicted --

(break in audio)

TANENBAUM: -- small Arab Jewish communities. Nearly a million Jewish refugees were brutally expelled from their ancient homes with all of their assets and properties confiscated. Today, in a Midtown Manhattan hotel, the remnants of the once-proud creative and pious Libyan-Jewish community are meeting to evaluate what has happened to their scattered people. Thanks to the initiative and dedication of Rafaela [Fella?] of Rome, leaders of some 100,000 Libyan Jews who now live in Israel, Italy, and the United States, are taking steps to preserve the richness of their culture and religion through films publishing the history of their people, and other means. They're also taking legal steps to try to recover their financial assets from Libya, which promised to do so, some 15 years ago. This first international convention of Libyan Jews may yet help remind the world that there is a forgotten refugee problem in the Middle East, [06:00] the one million Jewish refugees from Arab-Muslim countries. This is Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the American Jewish Committee.

M: The preceding was a commentary, the views expressed are not necessarily the views of WINS. WINS news time 7:59.

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