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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 3, Folder 34, Marc H. Tanenbaum Interview, 20 June 1979.



Q. What are your memories of the role that John Slawson played in the Ecumenical Council?

A. I think that a fair amount of people would generally agree that the Ecumenical Council was one of the historic and significant turning points in the relationship between the Vatican, the Catholic Church and the Jewish people. Certainly in this century, and probably for many centuries. Several things related to the AJC are not generally understood. The American Jewish Committee was the first group to risk getting involved in being related to the Ecumenical Council.

I had been associated with another group, before I came here -- the Synagogue Council of America. I tried to get the Ecumenical Council put on the agenda for discussion between Orthodox, Conservative and Reform groups and every time I put it on the agenda it was vetoed. They said it was an internal Christian thing, we have nothing to do with it and it's of no consequence to us.

Shortly after that, John Slawson invited me to come to the AJC and I was just struck by the contrast in the understanding of the events of history, what a difference could be made.

Q. Did the notion that the Jews could have some input into the Ecumenical Council originate with you?

A. No, I had just come on to the AJC just at the point at which the Vatican Council was being discussed in Rome. I came here in March 1960. The Vatican Council I think began in 1962. Pope John ~~Paul~~ ^{XXIII} talked about the Council late in 1960 and at that point John Slawson called a group of us together.

The other important point, apart from its being an important turning point in history, is that the achievement of Vatican Council II, in terms of facing up to anti-semitism, condemning it, calling

for a whole program to uproot the sources of anti-semitism was an important instance of a team effort at the American Jewish Committee and at the center of that team was John Slawson. There were a few other Jewish groups involved, but to this day, I'm persuaded that our work was decisive. As I saw the materials that were submitted and the kind of interventions that were made, ours was the most politically and diplomatically sophisticated, with the most scholarly input, and became the decisive work around which the Vatican Council declaration took place, which is to say that John Slawson deserves a great deal of credit for what took place, which he had never fully received.

The best way to describe John Slawson's role is to try to recreate some of the experiences. When we decided to get involved John called a meeting of the key people in the various departments to discuss with us the idea of the Ecumenical Council. He brought in David Danzig, Selma Hirsh, Simon Seigle of the foreign affairs department, myself, and probably one or two others. And we sat and talked at some length about what we understood to be happening, did it have importance to us, what was the justification for our getting involved, what was our mandate, what were our purposes. And it was that kind of keen, analytic probing to understand with some precision the potential of this opportunity and then what our role ought to be.

Then after the decision was made that this indeed did represent an opportunity for trying to bring about fundamental change in the mentality of the Catholic Church, in its policy as well as its teaching materials and its whole communications system -- attitudes towards Jews, Judaism, the Nazi holocaust, Israel, etc. -- at that point he assigned responsibilities to every one of us to play some

role. I had the responsibility for presiding over the preparation of the documents that we submitted to the Vatican Council. While you were sitting together with John, he'd get on the telephone and call Zack Schuster and ask Zack Schuster to go to Rome and talk to Cardinal Bea to find out what was going on. We sat together and John would say, "Any other questions, anything any of you want from Zack?" So it was that kind of collegial sense of working together. Which is to say that he managed to get the best insight, the best resources he could get of whoever in the agency had something to contribute, which is really part of his genius. However he may have differed personally -- whatever his personal or political attitudes, or ideological attitudes, he was very much task oriented, issue-oriented, and agency-oriented. And he continually argued for what is best for the Jews, what is best for the agency. And that's something I got from him. That was a kind of orientation which affected me deeply, and I think many others who were part of his corps of students or disciples in AJC.

Out of that then grew a whole series of things. Zack saw Cardinal Bea, came back, told us he ^(BEA) wanted a study from us to document that there were problems. There were many Catholics who didn't realize that there were problems about anti-semitism in textbooks, or certainly didn't see it the way Jews saw it and didn't know why Jews felt so strongly about it. We had completed earlier some studies at St. Louis University of Catholic religious textbooks, as well as social science and literature, and found a whole series of problems on anti-semitism, especially in the religious textbooks. We were the only agency in the world that had such studies available of the Catholic community. No one had done such systematic studies up to that time. So we put those studies together in a memorandum

called "The Image of the Jew in Catholic Teaching." And we cited chapter and verse -- this is how Jews are presented in terms of collective responsibility for the murder of Jesus, Jews as Christ-killers, Jews as the enemies of Jesus, the Pharisee's conflict with Jesus, Jesus' hostility to the Jews, the Jews rejected by God, the Jews as wandering people because they didn't accept Jesus as the messiah. All of those themes in the Catholic textbooks were included in the memoranda, were shown to Cardinal Bea, and I understand that Cardinal Bea translated the memorandum in six languages for all the members of his commission to read, for many Cardinals and Bishops to read, and a good number of them were shocked by the findings. They had no sense that there was this kind of systematic teaching of anti-semitism and the developing of a whole mentality of generations of young Catholics to hate Jews and to defame Judaism.

After reading that study, Bea came back to the Pope and he said, "it's absolutely essential that we change that direction. It must come to an end." And then the order was given that a declaration on the Jews had to be developed which would condemn anti-semitism.

~~John~~

John was not directly involved in the studies, that was my responsibility. But he sat on top of everything that was going on. He made sure that the studies were done, were sent on time, that Zack Schuster got them to the right people. In the best sense of the term, he was a traffic manager of every major thing we did in relation to the Ecumenical Council. That sounds like a trivial role, but at crucial moments in the struggle for the declaration, and it was a tight struggle, that went on from '62 to '65... If we were unclear at the beginning that this was a serious undertaking, it became clear to us when we saw who the opposition was.

The Arab churchmen from the Arab countries organized against it. The Arab governments organized against it. They said: Any declaration that would be sympathetic to Jews would automatically become a propaganda weapon for Israel. The government of Egypt under Nasser, spent an estimated \$3 million to publish a 700 page book called, The Plot Against the Church, which was an effort, based on the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, to show that there was a plot on the part of the AJC, the B'Nai Brith, the World Jewish Congress, to undermine Catholic teachings for Jewish purposes, and that we were in cahoots with a number of Catholics in the Church who were former Jews, or who were deceptive Jews parading as Catholics. They said Cardinal Bea's real name was Bayer, that he was a German Jew who became a convert. All this kind of stuff was going on.

That group plus the reactionary elements in the Catholic Church and the Curiate -- literally anti-semitic elements, people who got up in the Council and made anti-semitic speeches -- became a coalition to defeat anything coming out of the Council that would be sympathetic to the Jews or even respectful of Judaism. So we knew then that it was a really serious issue. It wasn't just a matter of a gesture or a pious resolution being adopted. It was an ideological struggle.

- Q. To go back for a moment, what ever led you to believe, to begin with, that you would be capable of making any real inroads into the structure and content of Catholicism?
- A. First of all, it's a classic Jewish virtue called chutzpah! But we also had a track record. I'd been working in this field of Jewish-Christian relations since 1951. And while in those days Jewish-Catholic relations was hardly a popular item, you couldn't find a Catholic who wanted to talk or had the right to -- they were not given permis-

sion to attend ecumenical meetings or dialogue groups. Still, before I came here I'd worked with the National Catholic Welfare Conference on problems of foreign aid and trade. I helped organized a White House conference on the moral foundations of foreign aid and trade in 1957 and I had the experience then of cooperation and deep friendships. I was a vice-chairman of the White House Conference on Children and Youth and so I'd worked very closely with some Catholic Bishops on social justice issues. I knew then there were some open people who were prepared to change, who really wanted to put an end to that past and were simply waiting for the signals from Rome.

Q. So there was a sense of the time being ripe for a new opening...

A. ~~Yes~~ There was a lot of restlessness developing. Also, there was a much longer experience working with liberal Protestants who I saw were prepared to change in a fundamental way their attitudes towards all these issues -- Christ-killer, proselytize, the conversion of Jews. ~~A~~ So I knew there were elements, and the Protestants had anticipated the Catholics by years. In fact, the first declaration of international importance was adopted by the World Council of Churches in 1961 -- the New Delhi Declaration. I worked on that with Dr. John Bennet of the Union Theological Seminary and I saw that there were people who were friends. John Bennett, Eugene Carson Blake. Those were almost training sessions for me. I saw what they asked of us, what I prepared for them then -- the documents, the discussions we had, what the issues were, ways of dealing with it where they could remain faithful to their own tradition and still do justice in relation to the Jews. So it was that experience, plus sensing something new opening up in Rome. Plus I'd been an avid reader of Catholic press here and in many parts of the world and I began to see a whole shift in the Third World. *The Western Church*

was now being confronted by the Third World and had to change. The Jews were really incidental to that process. The whole movement of the Curia could no longer be dominated by a group of Italian Catholics as if nothing had changed over the past 500 years. So it was because of the general change that there was a guarantee that some change had to take place. If they were going to change in relation to the Third World, the problems of the poor, and justice and all of that, then there was an opening for change with Jews.

At any rate, during the course of this struggle against the forces that were trying to kill the declaration, it became important to organize an effective counter-pressure to the Arab and reactionary pressure. And in that, John was critical as the master strategist of the agency. We used to come together in his office, while the Council was going on, if not every day, every other day. We were constantly monitoring what was going on. It was a continuous interplay and he was always involved in it.

At one point, for example, after a first text was introduced and there was a condemnation of the Christ-killer charge which was quite important as the centerpiece of the declaration, and the reactionaries set out to have it taken out, and the Arabs ~~worked~~ worked to take it out, we got a call from Zack saying that it looked bad. He said they'd organized forces, they've drafted a new text, they're sending it in to a theological commission which is going to kill the text, or else take all the guts out of it. So we asked Zack to discuss with his friends what is required. And he said: pressure from the American Cardinals, from the Latin American Cardinals, from the European Cardinals. So we sat down with John and we worked out together, with John at the center of it, a whole strategy. First of all, how ~~we~~ we would reach American Cardinals.

John knew that some of our most prestigious lay people were very close friends with the Cardinals. I knew some of that, John knew some and we pieced together whatever intelligence we had. WE knew, for example, that Jacob Blaustein was very close to Cardinal Sheehan of Baltimore. Cardinal Sheehan was the Chairman of the American hierarchy's commission on ecumenical relations which had responsibility for relations with the Jews.

Q. Why was Jacob Blaustein a close friend of Cardinal Sheehan?

A. For several reasons. First of all, they both lived in Baltimore. Jacob knew Cardinal Sheehan because Cardinal Sheehan's brother was in his employ, Frank Sheehan. Then also, Jacob was very generous in his support of Catholic Charities in Baltimore.

Q. Why?

A. As a matter of being a public citizen. This is true of all of our top lay people, people of substance. In each of the cities in which they live they contribute very substantially to Jewish charities, but they're also actively involved in the opera, in the art galleries, in the cultural life of the community, as well as in other civic activity. They feel it's a matter of good public policy to demonstrate to the Christian community that Jews who do business with many Christians in the community.... Jacob was in the oil business, probably ninety per cent of his clients were Christian, and since he earned his wealth from a Christian clientele he felt this was his way to reciprocate, in some sense a responsibility to Christian welfare. So he contributed to Christian Relief Services... In New York, for example, Lowenstein, in the textile business, has put up a whole building, on Fordham University's campus, called the Lowenstein Building. There's a Lowenstein wing at St. Vincent's Hospital,

which he gave to Cardinal Spellman. I just think that's good public policy if you have the means to do that.

Q. It's good politics.

A. Well it may be that. It's good sense. I don't think most of them thought in political terms, after all, they're not running for office. It's good public relations in that sense.

Q. I interrupted you. You were talking about the campaign you organized to get the support of the American Cardinals.

A. We were very methodical about it, which was also John's contribution. We looked at the map of the country, at the major cities where there were major Cardinals, Bishops and Archbishops, and we asked ourselves: Who knows these people? Who are friends of theirs? Who will be trusted? Who can tell them about our concerns and elicit some response from them? So, for example, in Boston, Sidney Raab was very close to Cardinal Cushing. They loved each other. In fact, Sidney Raab put up a whole building in honor of Cardinal Cushing at Boston College. The Raab brothers are members of AJC. In fact, Norman Raab was the chairman of my commission around that time. So Sidney volunteered. He said, "My God, yes, I'll call the Cardinal and talk to him." And I knew the Cardinal. I'd worked on some things with him. So at one point, Sidney talked to him about his concern, and then the Cardinal asked him what the issues were, and Sidney said, "Look, I can't handle those, you better talk to Rabbi Tannenbaum." So we set a date, I went up and Sidney and I saw the Cardinal and we talked things over. The Cardinal asked that I prepare a memorandum on what the issues were and what I thought he might do to try to get a constructive response. So I came back the same day and got him a memorandum within 48 hours and Cardinal Cushing played a very important role. I knew Cardinal Ritter in St. Louis. *There were not any*

Jews there who really had good contact with him but I had developed a real friendship with him. And he asked me to come out and see him and I did. So we went around the country. In Baltimore, Jacob Blaustein related to Cardinal Sheehan and when Jacob needed something of some academic or theological background I provided the stuff to him. And we did this in every community. In some cases there were some rabbis who had close contacts with some Bishops -- in San Antonio, Houston, etc.

My point is that the design for this, the master strategy, found John Slawson sitting in the cat seat and he would continually press us about clarity, precision, weighing ends and means, what our goals were. And I think that was a central contribution to our work in the field which, as I say, has never been acknowledged. I've gotten a lot of attention, probably more than I deserve. Zack Schuster deserves more credit for what he did in Europe. Everything that we did here in this country, we replicated, in some ways, to a lesser extent -- mainly because both the Jewish and Catholic communities are larger and more influential here than in other countries-- in Latin America. We needed the same kinds of interventions from Latin American Cardinals and Bishops, and we sat together with John. He got on the phone and called our then directors in Latin America indicating there was a need for them to reach the Cardinals in Buenos Aires, in Sao Paulo. And then Zack did the same thing in Europe -- we got Cardinal _____ in Belgium, Cardinal Koenig in Vienna, Bishops in Germany, and worked at publications.

So once we developed a master design, there were a number of people who had responsibility for major parts of action, to make sure that our concerns were understood, received sympathetically, and then were acted upon when the time came for the vote. And it's

now a matter of history. Of all the declarations, it received 99.8 per cent of the vote of all the Cardinals. It was unanimously adopted so that it became indisputably the conviction of the Catholic Church to change its attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, to condemn anti-semitism and call for a whole new relationship with the Jewish people. (Central records, 1962-65, JS' letters, for a concrete sense of the significant role he played in this.)

Q. What are some of the concrete results of the declaration?

A. First, there are content analyses of Catholic textbooks used today, that have been affected by the Vatican Declaration, by the Vatican Guidelines of 1975. The Declaration was adopted in 1965, in 1974 or '75, the Vatican issued a set of follow-up guidelines on how to implement the change of textbooks, the training of priests, and the liturgy; how all the stuff that contributes to anti-semitism must be taken out. It was like a guide book on how to get rid of anti-semitism in the whole Catholic communications system. There are some important studies on the changes like Faith Without Prejudice, and Catechetics and Prejudice, by Father ^{Pawlikowski} ~~Rakowski~~ which describes the changes that have taken place in Catholic textbooks. There have been a number of studies like that. We also have a Protestant study called The Portrait of the Elder Brother. In fact, that's an extraordinary record and no one has really looked at it. I don't know whether John himself is altogether conscious of it. He was busy with so many other things all at the same time. But his involvement, his commitment, made a very deep impression on me.

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Q. (Re: the situation of the Vietnamese boat people) You took the initiative in organizing the religious coalition to aid the boat people?

- A. Yes. The other groups had been doing some things on their own. But we took the major initiative in Washington. I found that they were looking at this in the main as another refugee problem. They do have refugee problems all over the world. In Africa, there are 4 million refugees, in Latin America, Nicaragua, elsewhere. So sometimes there tends to be a kind of blurring of distinctions of the magnitude of the problem. It's seen as one of a series of instances of man's inhumanity to man. I think the Jewish contribution has been to bring about a sense of urgency -- that this has, in many ways the makings of something of genocidal proportions, and that it calls for more than a conventional response. It calls for a truly dramatic response, to see this in its true epic proportions as a massive human disaster. It's a major emergency.
- Q. Is this the first time a Jewish agency has taken the initiative in this area?
- A. Actually, no. We did this in the Nigeria/Biafra crisis in 1967. I got involved in that too. I played the same role in that as I am in this. It's really my own sense of Jewish guts. I talk to thousands of Christians over the course of a year or so and it's been very easy for Jews to say to Christians that they're hard-hearted and indifferent to Jewish suffering and pain, that they abandoned us. We were very great at preaching that and there was justification for preaching that. Now here's a situation which confronts the Jewish community as it confronts everybody else. We know that millions of people -- certainly hundreds of thousands of people -- are going to die. An estimated 200,000 Vietnamese boat people have drowned already. And the world has sat by. The response has been almost frightening in its inadequacy. We know now that a dynamic has emerged

where Viet Nam is going to be pushing a million and a half ethnic Chinese out of Viet Nam in the next weeks. Malaysia has begun by pushing out some 500 refugees into unseaworthy boats this past weekend and they've begun rounding up another couple of thousand to send them out into the water/Unless there is some kind of organized systematic response on an emergency basis to scoop these people out of the sea, the majority of them will die. Malaysia has been talking about driving out 70,000 refugees. I don't know how much of that is done for dramatic effect, to mobilize the conscience of the world, and how much of that is serious policy. No one really knows. But it's evident that there's a need to deal with the worst possibility, which is that tens of thousands of people may die, unless a number of things are done.

We became involved in the Biafran/Nigerian struggle, the Ugandan struggle, the Sudan, where nearly a million people were massacred. There are all these massacres going on on nearly every continent of the earth and it's as if no one learned anything from the Holocaust. Here you have massive destruction of human life and people are abandoned. The world sits by, by and large, and watches human beings being destroyed. You could call it an epidemic of de-humanization that is taking place. If this goes on unchallenged and uncontained, if ways are not found to reverse this pattern of destruction of human life, the world will ~~not~~ simply exhaust itself in inhumanity and savagery. It becomes a morally anarchic world and human life becomes nothing. And I think we have a stake in this, both as human beings and as Jews, to do everything we can, to learn from our experience. We learned one lesson from the Nazi Holocaust: You shall not stand by while the blood of your brothers and sisters cry out to you from the earth. And when you know what is going on

you have an obligation to protest, and to try to contain it. Above all, to save lives, which is regarded as the greatest mitzvah in Jewish tradition. He who saves a single life is regarded as if he saved an entire world. Every human being is regarded as a cosmos of possibility, creativity.

So, we got involved in Biafra with Catholic Relief Service, Church World Service, and did a major piece of work. And we did things that others, for some reason, did not have the same skills at. Because of Soviet Jewry and Israel, we learned certain skills: how do you get through to a government agency, for example. There was a large committee of Christians who were trying to get through to the government on the Biafran struggle to try to get some planes for the Biafrans, to provide food. They were being stiffed, for some reason, by the State Department, and we found a way to open the door on it, for a whole delegation of Christians and Jews to go.

Q. Was it a matter of skills and strategy or personal contacts?

A. Both. Also, something else happens. In some government circles, there's a certain kind of skepticism about Christian moralism on some of these issues because there's the feeling that one of the real reasons that Christians are helping people in these countries is that they want to make converts. It's their missionary enterprise, that they have great self-interest in wanting to do that, and it just so happens that that coincides with the American national interest from time to time. Jews are known not to have any missionary enterprise. If there's ever a case of Jewish altruism, of caring for other people simply because they're human beings, in these situations, what comes off is a remarkable, almost clean response. There's no suspicion about what our motives are.

So that happened with the Biafran situation, and now again,

dealing with the Vietnamese problem, the Cambodian refugees, the Mung tribesman in Laos. And there is the potential here for a vast human tragedy. As a result of my own experience, having gone to Southeast Asia in February of 1978 and again in December, and having seen for myself what concentration camps are like, what starvation is like, violence, torture, families wiped out. It was an overwhelming experience. I wasn't able to sleep for weeks after that. I came back with the determination that this is one of our great obligations as Jews and as Americans and as citizens of this kind of world. Because we knew what it meant to have been abandoned, in the thirties. We knew the trauma. The world knew what was happening to the Jews and became conformed. It was really the banality of evil. It was simply accepted as a convention, that it's possible to go along with all your diversions and all your pleasures and all your normal and ordinary business and not be troubled by that; where the suffering of Jews is somebody else's problem. It's maddening. This becomes an increasingly absurd and insane world. It becomes impossible to live in that kind of world. And if the pattern continues, the demoralization, especially among young people... I think much of the deviant behavior in terms of drugs, and dropping out, and withdrawing into cults, is one of the responses to a world that's gotten out of hand. It's impossible to take hold of it, a feeling that you cannot do anything about it and there's no leadership showing ~~that~~ ^{how} you can do anything about it. There's the sense that you better take care of yourself. The hell with everything else.

Q. How did you originally become involved?

A. I got a call from the International Rescue Committee and I responded

by saying "yes." I went on these missions and came back and I began doing a whole series of things: I began lecturing in every major city in the U.S. about this problem, from a Jewish point of view -- out of Jewish history, Jewish ideas and values, our obligation to deal with it, and to deal with it with the urgency which is appropriate to the magnitude of the emergency. And I organized dozens of groups of Christians and Jews around the country to sponsor refugees. I wrote a series of articles and did a half dozen broadcasts that were syndicated around the country in this continuous effort to build interest and momentum. And I regard it as central to the work of our interreligious program. If Jews and Christians don't stand for saving human lives, they don't stand for anything. All the rest is trivial. There are important distinctions, but most of that is academic game-playing. And to live in this kind of world where the survival of the human condition is at stake -- nuclear warfare, nuclear proliferation, our maddening arms control situation, vast starvation, 700 million people starving to death, whole generations of young people who if they survive at all will live with mental retardation and physical disabilities as a result of hunger and starvation. There's a lot of generosity. But the pain and the pathology in the world is so great that the response must be massive and systemic, to try to contain this pathology and to restore some conditions of health. And this is a major part of my concern. I have great appreciation for what the Catholics and the Protestants have been doing on a long-term on-going basis. They have major installations and have been doing really good work. But as I've talked to some of the people around here, I just have not felt the same sense of urgency. The Malaysians were talking very seriously last week of shooting people, of driving them away. I called up some

people, Christians, and they said, "We're aware of it, and we're trying to do something," and I just turned. I just precipitated a crisis. I said, "Look, this is like Germany in the 1930's. What's happening to these people is what happened to my people. That can't go on again." And I said, "We're sending a telegram to the President, we're asking for a doubling of the quota of refugees, we want an emergency sea lift to get out there and pick people out of the sea before they drown, not after, we want a transit camp set up in Guam or someplace else, where people can be brought out in the thousands before they're destroyed."

Now what is happening is I'm getting calls from the Catholics and the Protestants. We also arranged -- this is not for publication -- to put together a fund with the Catholic Relief Service, Church World Service, JDC, International Rescue Committee and ourselves. A fund of about \$50,000 to provide rice on an emergency basis to the Cambodians who are being pushed across the border from Thailand, back into Cambodia. They've been given a supply of rice for one meal, and thousands are starving to death. So Bert Gold called JDC yesterday, after we talked over what our needs were, JDC, marvellously, just said, "Yes. You've got \$10,000." The whole package is being put together today and by tomorrow we will have some tons of food made available and taken to the Cambodians. We'll be doing it through the International Rescue Committee and Catholic Relief Service who have people on the spot -- large installations with personnel who can provide the food. So we'll stay right on top of this.

- Q. Are there people who question what this has to do with the Jews, given how "universalist" these concerns would be considered by some?
- A. I don't think you can be a Jew in this kind of a world, without being

There. I don't think you can be a human being and remain sane, without trying to do something to respond to this. A world that allows this to go on without responding really is not worth living in. I think I would go insane if I did not find some way to translate this anxiety into some concrete acts. To have a feeling that we, Jews, AJC were able to help save thousands of lives, to me that's what this game's all about. That's the whole point of our being in business. We're not in business to have staff advisory committee meetings. And the genius of AJC is that it allows people... That's what John Slawson did. He had one major criterion: Be effective. How do you get it done. And that was one of his great contributions.

(6-27-79)

- Q. What was the relationship between the AJC and the National Council of Churches before it took the stance it did on the Palestinians? What does that incident say about the work of alliance-building? What is the short- and long-term value of it?
- A. First I think it might be useful to get a little historical perspective on it. When one talked about Jewish-Christian relations prior to Vatican Council II, one was talking essentially about relationships between liberal Protestants and Jews. Prior to 1962 and the calling of the Vatican Council, really before 1965 when the Vatican committed itself to Ecumenical dialogue and relationship with Jews, the Catholic community was almost totally non-involved in relationships with other Christians or with Jews. So whatever conferences, institutes, joint social action programs took place prior to that time, essentially took place between mainline Protestants and Jews. A great deal of the activity in terms of jobs, FEPC, migrant labor,

foreign aid and trade invariably involved either the Presbyterians, or the Episcopalians, or the United Church of Christ or the American Baptists -- liberal Protestants. The major textbook studies were originally done by liberal Protestants. So as for those of us old enough to be involved at that time, there was a recognition that Jewish-Christian essentially meant liberal Protestant-Jewish relationships. So that was a kind of benchmark against which the present events have to be perceived.

There have been cycles in Jewish-Christian relations. In that period prior to Vatican Council II, as I said, the Catholics did not take part but there were no Evangelical Protestants who wanted to take part in dialogue. So only the liberal Protestants and the Jews were prepared to talk to each other and work together. They also formed a _____ of the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960's. The prominent figures in the movement, apart from Martin Luther King who was himself a ^{Protestant} ~~Protestant~~ churchman, were Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, who was then head of the United Presbyterian Church and also President of the National Council of Churches, Robert Spike, a whole cluster of people in the liberal Protestant establishment. In the 60's, much of the activity in civil rights involved Protestants and Jews, and little by little after '65 they involved Catholics to some degree, but almost no Evangelical involvement. So that was the first cycle, and that was the only significant cycle in Jewish-Christian relations prior to 1965.

After Vatican Council II closed, in October of 1965, and the adoption of the declaration on ecumenism, that is church unity, the declaration on Catholic-Jewish relations, the declaration on the Church in the modern world, the Catholic Church then had an obligation to participate in the suffering of mankind and caring

for social justice and human rights, and a^{second} cycle then began to emerge. And that was essentially the breaking out of the whole Catholic Church, into the American scene, especially. That was a kind of explosion of energy that tended to obscure the dialogue between liberal Protestants and Jews. First of all we had a limited number of people in the field, and when the Catholics came out of the closet and began asking to sit down with other Christians and Jews to talk either about theological subjects, textbook studies, or especially social justice movements, there was a great diversion of energy away from liberal Protestants. While we maintained relationships, especially around the Civil Rights Movement, there was a great concentration on what was then a novelty: Catholic-Jewish relationships. And between 1965 and 1975, that became one of the dominant activities in the whole area of coalition-building -- Catholics and Jews, Catholics, Protestants and Jews.

Toward the end of 1960, as the Evangelical community went through a profound transformation, essentially a social-economic revolution as much as it was a religious revolution. As people in the Sun Belt states became middle class, white collar workers -- studies in Atlanta showed, for example, that^{of} the membership of the Southern Baptist churches, seventy per cent were white collar workers of middle income. And they became increasingly acculturated to American middle class values and concerns. They also developed a much greater confidence about themselves. They stopped seeing themselves as crackers and rednecks, etc.

So we began a program in 1968 with the Evangelicals, which was smaller, more careful, because the debate was more emotion-laden because of the problems of conversion, also the imagery on both sides was filled with distortions and stereotypes, even more dis-

torted in many ways than the Catholic-Jewish stereotypes. At least there was Catholic ethnicity, which became the basis for some sort of mutuality.

In any case, from the end of 1968 through early 1975, the two major activities were Catholic-Jewish dialogue, which we participated in to the fullest extent possible, and then the opening^{of} the whole Evangelical-Jewish dialogue, which then peaked for us also around '75. We did this conference, produced the book, Evangelicals and Jews in Conversation.

To a certain extent, the relationship between the liberal Protestants and the Jews became neglected, on the part of much of the Jewish community, as well as ourselves. We kept lines open with ambassadors in the liberal Protestant community, and we ran conferences, but they were limited and spotty. We did a conference with the Presbyterians on human rights in the mid-1970's. We had a meeting with the leadership of the United Church of Christ. So we kept these relationships going with mainline Protestants. But they were not central, and there was no great continuity. It was really kind of restoring the old friendships that we had in 1950. There was almost a feeling of nostalgia about some of those meetings. We were repeating a cycle of the past.

Q. Is "we" the AJC?

A. Also, ADL carried on programs, although they're much more conventional in this field. They do the kind of ABC business -- Who are the Jews, What are they all about, What is anti-semitism all about, Israel. We kept looking for fresh ways that would have some connection with the most current, urgent problems facing us: human rights, civil rights, Church-State issues, Black-Jewish relations. We tended to try to break out of conventional ways of relating, so that

we could get into richer, fresher kinds of conversations.

In any case, during this period of time, there was a thing called the Middle East, and there was the 1967 war, and after that war it became clear that there were real problems resulting from the breakdown in communications, this decline in the relationships between the Protestants and the Jews. We almost never talked to them about Israel. Prior to 1967, Israel was almost never on the agenda of the Jewish-Protestant dialogue. Mainly because in the 1960's, the big issues in America were race and civil rights. And most of the Jewish energies were invested in that.

Also, the conflict between Israel and the Arabs and the PLO hadn't yet reached a critical phase. We perceived Israel as being threatened before the Six Day War, and we began looking to our allies for... Where are you? Say something comforting. Say that you care. And the silence in the Christian world, with rare exception, was terrifying. There was a terrible feeling of abandonment, that nobody cared. It was like living through the Nazi period of the 30's again; the whole world turned its back on you.

Well Israel won, and won smashing, and after that Israel emerged as the hero, so nobody saw any reason for saying anything in support of Israel. Israel was, in fact, the David. But it became very unsettling to us and we began organizing a series of conferences -- especially with mainline Protestants, but also with Catholics. You know, What are you sitting on your hands for? Didn't you care? And the answer that invariably came back was, We didn't know. First of all, we didn't know that Israel meant that much to you. It was never part of our dialogue; And secondly, many of us felt that Israel was going to wipe the hell out of them.

But we knew then that there was a need to get into the question.

We systematically started a whole series of dialogues around the country. AJC took the leadership in organizing regional institutes around the country: What is Israel? What it means to Jews religiously, historically, culturally. And there began to develop more understanding among key Protestant leaders around the country.

While that was going on, in that kind of vacuum, the Arab missionaries continued to carry on their program of building sympathies toward the Arab world. The American Protestants have the largest missionary installations in the Arab world of any Christian body. The United States is the UJA of Protestant missions. Seventy per cent of the funds for missionary activity in the Protestant world is raised in the US. This is their launching pad. Close to that percentage of missionaries, not only for the middle East but for Africa, Asia and Latin America, comes from the US. This is the powerhouse of world Protestantism. In a sense the intellectual brain trust is still in Germany, and Sweden and Switzerland and Holland, but the muscle of Protestantism is here. And a good part of that muscle was invested in support of Arab missionaries.

They continued to work very quietly. No public fuss. They kept sending out brochures saying, "Lo the poor Palestinian refugees," always with the implication that the reason they were refugees was because of Israel. And that kind of low-grade hostility toward Israel was salted in among certain Protestant pastors around the country and their lay leadership. We were never fully conscious of that. I just became aware in 1968, when the Friendship Press did its first Middle East Studies program, when I saw their first literature. I was still working at the Synagogue Council at the time. I raised hell and they made certain accommodations at the time. But that was an insight to me that there was a whole system here devoted

to promoting anti-Israel, pro-Arab propaganda, or information, in this country.

After the 1967 war, ^{we} as/were conducting these institutes around the country, I did a study in 1968 for our own information -- it was never published but was a prelude to what Judy's study is now -- on pro-Arab, anti-Israel influences in the Protestant Churches, especially the National Council of Churches and the mainline Protestant bodies. And it became clear that there was a systematic effort, both within and outside the mainline Protestant churches, to try to turn American public opinion away from Israel and toward support of the Arab cause, much of it exploiting sympathy for the Palestinian refugees.

That pattern continued until 1973. We managed to contain much of the vitriol of the anti-Israel propaganda. We also managed to build increasing understanding in the communities around the country. One thing we began to find was that ^{there was} a fundamental difference ^{between} ~~in~~ the commitments and the political orientation of the bureaucrats in the churches of liberal Protestantism whose careers were invested in Palestinian refugees, and people in the communities. A Presbyterian pastor in Columbus, Ohio cared about Palestinians, as he cared about everybody else, but he also cared about his Jewish neighbors, because the rabbi down the street was a friend of his, and they ate in each others' homes, or they worked together on problems of urban renewal in their city. They didn't share the attitudes of the people in the headquarters. So there was a kind of Protestant populism which had no perception of what's going on in the church bureaucracy, quietly, silently. They give money to refugee causes as a matter of charity, Christian conscience. They also support missions. But there is no sense of the kind of embitt-

tered hostility, that Israel stands in the way of their activity in that part of the world.

Well that program, between 1967 and 1973, with local Protestants, local Council of Churches, resulted in a very large group of liberal Protestants becoming deeply disenchanted by what was going on in the church bureaucracies. They felt their money was being exploited, that they were supporting left wing ideological movements, national liberation movements, guerilla warfare, terrorism, both through some mainline Protestant groups and the World Council of Churches, and between the end of 1968 and the beginning of 1970, the Presbyterians lost about fifty per cent of their income, lost half of their staff. The Episcopelians.... Now actually the Middle East issue wasn't as central as the civil rights issue. They were supporting Angela Davis, Rap Brown, Stokely Carmichael, the whole militant radical left wing of the black movement. And middle America said the hell with that. We're not paying money to destroy, to support a system which is anti-American.

So those mainline churches suffered a trauma. In many cases, they lost half their budgets, staffs, and memberships. The headquarters used to be like tombs. It was like the Saturday Night Massacre. People were just wiped out, disappeared. They've made some recovery since that time. But the reality still exists, the missionary bureaucrats in the churches continue to ply their wares -- Israel stands in the way of peace, Israel is intransigent, Israel is against human rights.

Q. Is it just a matter of convenient politics?

A. They really believe it. It's the liberation theology. They saw everything as a class struggle and they identify with the oppressed peoples of the world, which means the blacks in South Africa and

Rhodesia, with the oppressed people in Latin America, which are quite legitimate concerns that Jews could identify with. It's just that in many of those Marxist movements, there's a tendency to identify with the PLO, so much so that PLO propaganda infiltrates liberation theology in the community and they latch on to it. And there are trade-offs: We'll support you on South Africa if you support us on this; you support us in Nicaragua, etc. So that continues to be a very major problem for us.

After the 1973 war, the whole world shifted. Before it was a matter of being nice to the Arabs, and to the Moslems and Palestinians. Now the Arab nations emerged as a super power and a cartel, that could shake up the economies of the Western world, and as it looks now, almost bring them to their knees. So some of the Arab missionaries are now saying, "We told you so." There's almost a feeling of jubilation about their prophecy becoming fulfilled.

"We told you that if you identified with Israel, if the US remained in Israel's corner, if you don't take the Arabs and Palestinians seriously, we'll pay a terrible price for it." And in that scenario, Israel continues to be the scapegoat. Israel continues to be responsible for everything that goes wrong, and we, the American people, are now paying the price for our univocal support of Israel.

So with that as their argument since 1973, they've been pushing for the US to unhook itself from support of Israel, which they call unilateral support of Israel, and to develop more even-handed, more balanced policy toward the Middle East which means support of not just Egypt, but Saudi Arabia, that great democracy, Jordan, Syria, etc. So now, in this setting, their work becomes even more troublesome because the atmosphere in the Congress and in America is such that while there is continuing support for Israel, they can exploit

the current economic problems. Also, that small group of liberal, or even Marxist Protestants, are in collusion with pro-Arab elements in the State Department, who never wanted Israel to be established in the first place. And they consult rather frequently, and the State Department says: It's very important to move American public opinion away from support of Israel, to support of the PLO. So we found, two years ago, that ^{at} the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church, a resolution was printed, put in the kit of every delegate ~~is~~ in Philadelphia, saying that we call upon the General Assembly of the United Presbyterian Church to recognize the PLO as the sole ^{legitimate} ~~and genuine~~ representative of the Palestinian people. Unconditional. Nothing said about terrorism, violence, destruction of life. Nothing said about asking the PLO to give up the Palestinian covenant to cause the destruction of Israel. They tried to pull a fast one.

So we talked to many of our Presbyterian friends, pastors in communities around the country, who were outraged when they heard about it. And when they came to the United Presbyterian convention, they tore up the resolution and introduced their own. They defeated the other, and the one that passed calls for recognition for the right of Israel to exist, to be a sovereign state with secure borders, and to recognize the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. They refused to endorse the PLO in any way, because of terrorism. So it was a victory of the people over the bureaucrats.

You can see how serious they are. They flew in Presbyterian missionaries from Egypt, Jordan and Syria, for that one resolution at that convention. And they got up and testified: If you don't pass this resolution, you're going to wipe us out in the Arab countries, there will be reprisals, etc. They tried to intimidate

the convention, but the convention didn't buy it. But things like that happen rather regularly.

Q. What can the AJC do to counteract things like that?

A. More of what we're doing. One of the things we do is, at appropriate times, when we have enough data, we expose our enemies. We tell the American people, and the churches, what they're supporting. And people begin to question what they're giving money for. "I'm never asked about it, and they presume to speak for me, but they don't speak for me." And then they vote with their feet and their pocket books.

The other thing we've done is we've build networks of real friendships in every city in the US with local pastors, who are generally fair-minded people. They want to see something decent happen for the Palestians, as we do, provided that it doesn't lead to further terrorism and destruction in that part of the world. And almost invariably, they turn down these resolutions. They see it as infiltration of their churches. So we continue that, and it's an enormous piece of work. It's constant.

We're going through a thing now with ~~the~~ the Friendship Press, the Middle Eastx Mosaic. My staff sat with the Friendship Press for months revæwewg their books, that were written by missionaries, all of it hostile to Israel. And there's a film on the Middle East in which Israel doesn't exist. But, to their credit, once we submitted critiques, line by line, chapter and verse, they esponded to it and made fundamental changes. They rewrote whole textbooks, added whole chapters to incorporate positive references to Israel and Jewish concerns, and they're now rewriting the film guide. So there's a lot of that going on.

Q. Who finances Friendship Press?

A. It's the official publication arm of the National Council of Churches, all denominations participate in it, and the United Methodist Church is central to it. We sent around a memorandum to our people, a dozen or so got in touch with the local Methodist bishops and got very positive responses. They said, "We want no part of that business. We will not use this material if it's anti-Israel." And they're writing back to their headquarters now and saying, "What the hell are you doing? You're supposed to be promoting reconciliation and friendship, but instead, you're promoting hostility and polarization."

So if you're asking if coalitions work, yes, they work, provided you invest in them. But also provided that you have a common agenda -- I'm not sure if I got that from Irv Levine or he got it from me.... It will not work if all Protestants care about are Protestant issues, or if Jews only care about Israel and Soviet Jewry and anti-Semitism, nothing else. This whole action on the Indochinese refugees has been a splendid example of coalitional concern about somebody else. We have absolutely no vested interest in that. We're not trying to convert them to become Jews. The Christians are, especially the Evangelicals -- their big thing is that they can get Vietnamese, Cambodians, to become Evangelical Christians. That's not our concern. Our concern simply is to help save human lives. That's a very deep Jewish value to us and AJC has been at the center of that, since the beginning of 1978. Most of the other Jewish groups are just now coming around to that. AJC gave me the freedom to go to Southeast Asia twice this past year and we did a major piece of work with the White House, the State Department, with Congress. And with the International Rescue Committee, we literally changed the foreign policy of the US. We tripled, quadrupled the quota for refugees to this country. When we began there was a quota of 7,000 a year. Now

it's 50,000, plus another 25,000 which the Attorney General can grant, and we're now pushing to increase it even more. And the Christians recognize and appreciate our involvement. When we got involved we really catalyzed it, dramatized it, pushed it forward. There's a lot of internal rivalry, about whether the Catholics or the Protestants are really the saviors of the refugees. There was internal jockeying about who should be the spokesman at the press conference tomorrow and it was decided, by consent, that it would be Cardinal Cooke, which is appropriate because I think the Catholics have brought in and cared for more people. So, that's where we are.

Q. What are the current~~er~~ priorities of the Interreligious Affairs Department? How do they relate to work begun under JS?

A. It just so happens that I've got an outline of our priorities for 1979-80! But I'll mention the major things. I think that which has continuity with what was started under John Slawson, certainly is our work with the Roman Catholic Church. We continue our program which involves implementing the policy that was established at Vatican Council II. So we've ~~z~~ been involved in producing new textbooks, teacher training institutes, working on change in the liturgy, history books, in terms of references to Jews and Jewish experience in the Christian West. We have now scheduled two very interesting projects with the Catholic community for the coming year. One is, we have a commitment to do a joint publication with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops on Jewish-Christian relations, prepared mainly for the training of Roman Catholic priests, to be used in all of their seminaries as a guidebook to Jewish-Christian relations, and then to be used with the 55,000 Catholic ~~pr~~ests in America.....

....The early textbook studies done in 1957, 1958, were done in an atmosphere of defensiveness and anxiety as to whether or not it

was permissible to do this, without the permission of the Cardinal or the Bishop. So that the study on religious textbooks in particular, Sister Rose (?) has about a quarter of the book quoting statements of authorities saying, "You're allowed to do this." Then she went ahead and did it. Of course that atmosphere has changed and that's one project of implementation which goes back to that period of time.

A second project we have in a sense is derivative but it also takes into account a changed situation that really was not anticipated by anybody, and that's the fact that we're now going to run a series of conferences with Polish-Catholic priests and Jews. Obviously, that has to do with the emergence of Pope John Paul II, the first Polish Pope. And the fact that around his ascendancy to the papacy, there has emerged first of all a great surge of Polish pride, especially in the Polish Catholic Church. Also, because of the showing of the Holocaust t.v. program, and the Polish Pope's emergence, the whole issue of Polish-Jewish relationship has now become more salient than at any time in the past. The showing of the film resulted in a number of Polish groups feeling that all Poles were being maligned, portrayed as anti-semites. I was a consultant to "The Holocaust" at NBC, so we got a whole bunch of letters, and they did, complaining about the portrayal. On the other side, there has been a good deal of mistrust about the Polish pope being named, especially among survivors/in the Jewish community: What good could come from Poland? He must have been steeped in anti-semitism like all the rest of them. And that led to a growing tension and strain as well as in relationships between Poles and Jews. Irv Levine has been doing some work on an ethnic basis, but it became clear to

me that there is a whole group of Polish-Catholic churchmen who are untouched by the ethnic side of it. We have a program involving people like Bishop Abramowicz, a Polish Bishop in Chicago, who would never come to an ethnic meeting; a Polish Catholic priest like Father John Pawlikowski, who has been working with us for decades on the religious side of Catholic-Jewish relationships; and a number of other people like that.

Q. Wasn't Geno Baroni trying to organize those same People?

A. Yes, but in a different way. Geno's agenda is far closer to Irv's than it is to mine. Geno's agenda deals with urban problems, neighborhood problems. But you seldom get to the deep religious sources of the attitudes, nor to the historical questions. Geno's been concerned about America 1978, 1979. How do you build houses, pick up the garbage, and put a neighborhood together. But people walk around with their heads filled with garbage about each other. And the attitudes of Poles toward Jews which are deeply formed in theology, Christ-killer charges, ritual blood libel, Jews desecrate the host. So those issues have to be faced and that's what we're concentrating on. Irv and I are doing a consultation together in September in Detroit, Bookie's joining us too, with a group of Polish and Jewish religious and ethnic leaders and we're going to take a look at the whole scene. Now that also grows out of the whole impulse of ~~Polish~~ Catholic-Jewish relations. That is, Polish Catholic priests feel they can get into this now because of Vatican Council II. They're freed up to get into that kind of conversation, especially now, because of the Polish Pope, who went to Auschwitz and said a number of things there, like "One cannot remain indifferent to this hatred and this persecution."

In any case, those are two of our major themes with the Catholic

community. We are also going to continue to intensify our work with the National Interreligious Task Force on Soviet Jewry, which is headed by a Catholic nun, Sister Ann Gillen, and in which Catholics are prominently involved, with us, as well as Protestants and Greek Orthodox, in organizing conferences and programs and petitions in support of Soviet Jewry and oppressed Christians in the Soviet Union and East European countries. That task force was the first to raise the question of Pastor George _____, the Baptist minister who was allowed out with Ginsberg and the others. So that's another substantial piece of work with the Catholic community. We're now working with them heavily on the Indochinese refugees, which is the social action side of our work with them.

- Q. It seems to be closely related to the Slawson legacy.
- A. It's absolute continuity and it will go on, indefinitely. That is, what was established there as the precedent and the model. We are simply now developing new ways of translating that impulse into a new situation.
- Q. Is that impulse and the process of program implementation unique to the AJC?
- A. I think one of the interesting things is that the models that we established in our work, especially with the Catholics since the 1960's, has been replicated by other Jewish agencies. Our material is incorporated into the program plan of the NCRAC, then you suddenly see versions of it appearing in the ADL, and then the UAHC, and the Synagogue Council, which I take to be a tribute. It's part of the influence of AJC in helping us to organize the priorities for the whole Jewish community. It simply means that we have to continue to be more creative and innovative if we want to continue to maintain the lead we have. We still are the number one agency in this field.

Others are competing by creating all kinds of auxiliary things like ours. But it's clear in terms of our work with the Evangelicals, and the Roman Catholics, and the Greek Orthodox -- nobody touches them. We're the only group to organize a consultation, publish a volume with them, and sustain continuing relationships with them.

- Q. Speaking with you, I get a picture of an agency which is anything but inward-looking, as described by so many others in the past few weeks...
- A. First of all, the very nature of our work involves alliances ~~not~~ with others. We do ambassadorial work, in the main. Come hell or high water, these relationships and communications systems have to be kept open, during rough times and good times. It's a leadership responsibility to be in touch with a whole bureaucracy out there to see that Jewish and American interests, as we see them, are best served. So to us the notion of withdrawal is a luxury. Maybe if you live on the East Side or in Williamsberg or Crown Heights where you have autonomous communities, or even in Shaker Heights, Cleveland, where you have an autonomous community which appears to be self-sufficient and is preoccupied with its own well-being, and only with Israel and Soviet Jewry... maybe you can do that and get away with it. But I think it's clear that given the reality of living in this kind of open society, with all the problems we face, you pay a very terrible price by withdrawing from the main scene. The day the Jews cease to be a political, economic, cultural force in the mainstream of American society, we will become expendable. We'll be perceived as a statistical quotient in the American community, as being 2.7 per cent of the American people. And with all the push for quotas and proportional representation, people are going to start saying, "The Jews ought to get 2.7 per cent of the American pie." That's what that type

of isolationist thinking can ~~not~~ lead to. Whereas when Jews participate, especially as one of the big faith communities, we're one of the big four faiths of America, or three faiths. Tomorrow I'll be at a press conference with Cardinal Cooke, and with the head of Church World Service, and not by indulgence, but by active invitation, people seeking us out. They want a Jewish presence there, for all kinds of things: what we represent historically, morally, ethically, and for the work we've done in the field. And I have no problem explaining our work.

In fact, it may be of some interest, a year ago, Bert Gold and Selma Hirsh did a study of our leadership, to give priority ranking to the programs of AJC, and Jewish-Christian relations was ranked first. I wasn't even there! They understood what it meant for Jews to be present in the mainstream of American life. One of the points I make is a sociological reality: there are roughly 146 million people in America who are affiliated with the churches and the synagogues in this country. With all the diversity and pluralism, it is still the largest network of organization in America. No other group brings together that many people on a Sunday morning, or a weekday Bible meeting, than do the churches. If one has connections with that system of communication, it means that you are touching a very large part of the society -- two-thirds of it. And we manage to keep in touch with the leadership of that whole network. It affords us an opportunity to get our message through -- through mass media, publications, conferences, resolutions -- which we'd never be able to do on our own. And it takes the friends and the allies in those places who will join with us in making that possible. That's the story of coalition. It's a very big piece of action.

Q. There's something a bit unclear to me about your work, in relation to

the supposed turning inward of the AJC into the mainstream of the Jewish community, into internal Jewish concerns. Is it a matter of priorities changing?

- A. You're talking about two realities that co-exist. But I think there is a historic thing here that does tie in with John Slawson. John's perception of what's good for the Jews is expressed in the phrase: the welfare of the Jewish community is interdependent with the welfare of American democracy. There's a good deal of wisdom in that. I think we see that every day. You get an energy crisis, and if America suffers because of it, and if there's no movement leading to alternate sources of energy and the economy becomes constricted, it's clear a kind of cannibalism is going to set in in the society. You get just a taste of it with people shooting each other in the gas lines. And somewhere along the way, as recession, inflation, unemployment set in, as life becomes difficult for the general society, life will become difficult for the Jews, but more so. In a society which is in very great trouble, invariably conspiratorial theories emerge about who is responsible for our bad condition. Why is it that before we had such a state of glory and why are we in such a state of decline? They'll be looking for a scapegoat. And the scapegoat could well become Israel and the American Jews who are supporting Israel. Yesterday somebody brought in a leaflet that had been passed out to hundreds of people standing in line. It was undoubtedly prepared by the Arab League or one of the Arab propagandists. It said, "Why stand in line? Why are you going through all this suffering? The US government has committed itself to give oil to Israel for the next 15 years. Why do we tolerate that?" Now we've just seen a few of those. But it illustrates the point that what is bad for American's health invariably will become bad for Jews.

John's emphasis had been very strongly to participate in the general strengthening of democratic institutions in the society, and strengthening those relationships. It's a matter of record now that the policy under John Slawson, in doing that, was to spend very little time in the ^{internal} Jewish coordinating agencies. First of all John, by his very nature, sought to create distinctiveness, uniqueness, and felt that we would be diluted, our distinctiveness would be washed out in these coordinating agencies which would appropriate our ideas, and he didn't want to waste time battling over every issue with those agencies. So John tended to move the agency away from involvement in the NCRAC, in a Presidents 2 conference. You have to spend a fortune of time and energy in those cooperative agencies and the product they produce frequently is a mess. By the time you finish with all the committees and the consensus, the hardware you produce is reduced to the lowest common denominator.

So John tended to move the agency away from connections with mainstream internal Jewish life, for a good part of his career. I think one of the contributions of Bert Gold was, mainly because of his own involvement with the Jewish Welfare Board and Jewish Community centers, he was deeply rooted primarily in the internal life of the Jewish community. He knew the strengths of that, he knew how to do it. And he also knew that ideologically it was important for AJC not to cut itself off so far from the mainstream that it looked as if we were only interested in currying the favor of Christians and the general society, didn't care what was going on in Jewish life. Those are extreme ways of stating it, but that was part of the pull that was going on. Bert sought to involve us increasingly ~~with~~ in relationships with the NCRAC and other Jewish bodies. So in that sense, Yehuda Rosenman's program, for example, is a testimony to our

caring about internal Jewish life; feeling a greater responsibility for trying to serve Jews as well as the general society.

The issue has been a difficult one for me. I really learned both from John and from Bert Gold. I don't think it's a question of either/or. In very extreme forms, either/or can become disastrous and impoverishing. It's really a matter of both/and. And in fact the broader base of support you have in Jewish life, the greater credibility you have, the more authentic a spokesman you are in relation to the general society. If you speak only for a very limited group of people who are deracine, assimilated and self-hating Jews, you're really not talking about the reality of Jewish life. So I think the movement has been toward a ~~max~~ mix now which incorporates some of the best features of John's ideology and of Bert's. We have this on-going internal debate about the particular and the universal. Yehuda Rosenman represents the particularist emphasis, Irv Levine's and my program represent the universalist emphasis. But I personally pay a great deal of attention to internal Jewish life. When I'm in any community, I spend nearly 40 per cent of my time going to synagogues, rabbinic associations, welfare funds, federations, CRC's. I almost never go into a community without doing something with the Jewish community, even as I prepare to do something with the Christians. I'm going to Des Moines, Iowa tomorrow to talk at the Israel Bonds Association, and the following morning I'm doing something with the Catholic Bishop, and all the priests, and ministers and rabbis in the city, as a way of touching all of those bases. So I'm saying that the inheritance of John, the conception he represented is still here, and we continuously talk about it.

- Q. If you were in charge of this agency at this point in time, would you think it would be in the best interest of the Jews, as a group,

to take a public position opposing what Begin is doing on the West Bank?

A. That's a very difficult question. I'm very deeply disturbed. I think probably some case can be made for the historic rights of the Jews to the West Bank and some formula ought to be worked out. But I cannot think of a more abrasive and alienating way of doing it, than the way Begin and Sharon are doing it. It's as if they think the American people, and the American government, are twelve-year-old idiots. You come to the United States and you say, "Give me one and a half billion dollars a year, in military supplies and aid." Now the amount of aid Israel gets in one year from the US government is more than the UJA has raised over the past 12 years. Then to turn around and tweak your nose.... I'm not saying that one has to capitulate and become supine. But there is an alternative way in which one can try to persuade people of the right to create a pluralistic society on the West Bank. That's what Begin is talking about. He simply does not know how to use the conception or the language. So he comes off talking like a military conqueror. And really almost like an Ergonist. You negotiate and negotiate, you smile and smile, and then you're the conquering power. And it's a very worrisome thing because all the public relations in the world that we and the other agencies do cannot counter the single dramatic fact of driving Arabs off their land, and taking their land and building a settlement. That's a hell of an image to contend with. And it's alienating a lot of Jews. I don't think Begin realizes how many Jews are deeply disturbed. And the business of bringing Jewish leaders in and getting them to make nice statements about it is not going to alter that reality.

Q. Not to mention American public opinion...

- A. There's very deep sentiment in support of Israel, but people are finding it very difficult to justify that against all other claims... Why support Israel? It's a democracy like the U.S., it stands for the same values -- justice, human rights, caring for people, refugees. But after awhile, there is a sense that there's a terrible hypocrisy going on. Israel makes a big gesture about the Vietnamese, yet they turn around and won't let the Palestinians have their own land, of some kind. I think that's an incredible piece of arrogance. I suppose you feel that way even if you think that God dictated that that's the map for you, as Begin and his Orthodox supporters believe. I'm very worried about the future of Israel. I think that if that kind of behavior continues, with the kind of control the Arabs now have over the energy resources of the Western world... We were told flat out by Helmut Schmidt that if Begin continues to exploit the situation in this way, we may have to face the fact that Israel will be abandoned by the Western world, that nothing else we could do will ever help. And if we don't resolve the Palestinian situation one way or another, it will be an endless sore.
- Q. Supposing hypothetically that this agency could reach a consensus about the problem and that it would make some sort of strong public statement, would it make any difference in your opinion?
- A. The question is who it would make any difference to. I don't know whether it would make any difference to Begin. Although I must say, I am increasingly persuaded since the days of the Viet Nam war that the power of public opinion is very great. Here's the United States, it invests all of its power and might in Viet Nam, and a bunch of kids start marching in the streets. Then a bunch of clergymen. And they raised enough hell over a period of time until they forced President Johnson to resign from office. And they eventually forced

the US government to change its foreign policy. And I think that may well happen in Israel. I don't think the Peace Now movement should be underestimated. While they don't have actual political power, they have a kind of moral authority. And if enough Jews in America begin to share the mentality of the Peace Now movement, something will have to give. Otherwise you're going to have this terribly defensive, almost spartan garrison. And if America's economy continues to be really bad, as it probably will in the next year or so, and if Americans begin getting very stingy about their money, and with justification... How do you spend money overseas when people can't get jobs. Life is going to become very difficult, very grim, you may see a mood developing, and it could happen faster than we realize. And I think frankly that's what Sadat is counting on. I think that Sadat reads the power of public opinion, and of public relations, with an unerring genius. And I think his determination to bring the US into this and to get into the systems of communications of the US as a friend, as he now appears -- he's now third or fourth in all the polls of the most respected leaders -- and much more of that can lead to very substantial erosion. And while we'll do everything we can to continue to support Israel, on certain issues it becomes impossible to defend Israel. Israel's sending arms to Nicaragua for Somoza, while one could say that's a matter of geopolitics, of real politics, of economics and all that... Ostensibly Israel has a nuclear exchange arrangement with South Africa. It's my professional job to defend Israel, and I want to personally do that as much as I can. But when things like that happen which I think are wrong, I would first of all find ways of saying to the Israelis, "I think this is horrible." And if my government did it, the American government, I would feel no less critical. It's just

that I know they'd be more vulnerable now so I'd be more muted in the way I'd do it, more careful. But at some point it really gets to be a matter -- and I know that Carter, and Vance and Brezhnev say this to Israel: "We're doing this in your own best interest." And while you don't like to take that because its kind of paternalistic, somewhere along the way, at the very least, American Jews have to have the opportunity to discuss with the Israelis what are the consequences of their behavior.

The way it stands now, the relationship between Begin's government and ours is a colonial one. He does what he wants to do, and then we're called to bail him out of the consequences.

- Q. The diversity of opinion on that, even in this agency, is remarkable.
- A. I know, there are some hard-liners who say, Don't give the bastards an inch. They abandoned us in the past, they don't care about our survival, you've got to do everything you can to keep your powder dry and to be powerful, and screw them. We'll just battle it out." That's a kind of Dunkirk mentality. It's a Massada mentality, you know, you're going to go down with a gun in your hand.
- Q. And some people think that if there were no Israel, American Jews wouldn't suffer all that much.
- A. I know people around here feel that way. But that's the diversity of Jewish life. There's an incredible pluralism and that's fine. But I think the issue really is: we could spend a hundred years here building up the image of American Jews, and one cataclysmic episode in the Middle East could wipe us out. Take the worst apocalyptic case: If Israel were seen as endangering the peace of the world, and because of its intransigence, the Arabs were going to stop all the oil, and the Western economies would grind to a halt, the anger and the rage... I don't think I'd want to be around when

that happens.

- Q. How is it that people still don't see that the Jews are indivisible, whether or not they want to be?
- A. That's Sartre's definition of a Jew. He says: "A Jew remains a Jew, because the Christian world will never let him stop being a Jew." And now it's a matter of Jews and Israel. The Christian world does not make those distinctions. I don't want to oversimplify that, and I realize that the politics in Israel are horrendous. In my wildest dreams, I don't think I'd want to be involved in the Israeli government. To have to put up with ~~x~~ everything from the Communist Party to Agudeth Israel in one cabinet is a nightmare. In that sense, Begin is a genius -- to hold that cabinet together and survive, week after week, with diametrically opposed ideologies. And the name-calling and the scandalization. And Sadat does not have that. When he makes up his mind, he says, "Yes Mr. President, I'll sign that." Then he calls in the parliament to ratify what he's already decided. There are certain benefits to that kind of authoritarianism!
- Q. Final question. There are a lot of people, including the "neo-conservatives" apparently, who believe that one of the major problems of this age is the decline in religion. Do any of the people you deal with talk and think in terms of what can be done to regenerate a spiritual component ~~to~~ in the life of our society?
- A. That's very hard. The Pope is working on that in the Catholic Church today, out of deep theological and philosophical roots. His whole trip to Poland was an effort to demonstrate the vitality of Catholic faith. Everything happened around the Catholic mass, but in the context of the mass, he talked/^{Catholic} politics. And now he's going to extend that through Europe. He's talking about Christian unity as the basis of solidarity among the European countries be-

cause they're predominantly, at least formerly Christian populations. And he's going to use Christian ecumenism as the basis of trying to realign the whole political scene in Europe.

For Jews it's much more difficult. That's no model for us in terms of its extent because Jews are highly decentralized. We don't have any chief rabbis. So we have to do our thing in a different way. Also traditionally, Jewish religious life has been altogether decentralized. And the basic tradition, going back to the beginning of the rabbinate was that every rabbi is a _____, he is the ranking authority in his own community, among his own people. So it's much more of a community --, almost a neighborhood orientation. When the rabbis come together in synods and national conferences they can develop some kind of consensus. On a rare occasion, a personality will emerge who in a sense will be the equivalent to that papal, charismatic style. Rabbi _____, for the Orthodox rabbis, has been that. But in a kind of abstract, academic way. People listen to his lectures for 3 or 4 hours. He hasn't really decisively affected the whole organization of their life-style.

- Q. What I'm getting at has more to do with values -- spiritual vs. material. Is it possible to get people back on a spiritual track, to counterbalance to some degree the damage done by the technological age?
- A. That's an overwhelming issue. The impact of science, the ideology of science as being the sole source of truth, and the only way one can validate truth is through empirical data, which is to say that side of empirical data which cannot be brought under a microscope has no meaning and no reality, means that that side of the personality that is poetry and music and beauty and mystery and fantasy and awe is devaluated as being of no consequence. And that is

really what makes us human.

However there are lots of little pockets of things going on, in terms of trying to engage the central cultural forces which are shaping the ideology of the society. For example there are dialogues going on between scientists, medical practitioners and ethicists, moral theologians -- What are the ethical implications of what you're doing? What is the basis on which you make these choices, on which you play God? About DNA, or cloning, or triage. All the critical moral questions. They're not just scientific. They're questions about your value system and how you justify making what are life and death decisions for people. At the very least, it leads to a certain kind of modesty after awhile.

Some of that's going on, not enough of it. And it may be that the society will have to suffer some great catastrophe before it's really thrown back on itself and it says, How in the hell did we get this way? How do we get out of it? I know more young people who joined one of the Jesus cults, or the Harems or something, really dropped out after Hiroshima or Auschwitz or facing the reality of ICBM's. And while I disagree with the politics of the anti-nuclear movement, because I don't think they've really exhausted the possibility of whether there can be nuclear energy with safe technology and there are scientists who say that safe technology can be guaranteed as much as with any other kind of utilities, it's just that it's never really been adequately enforced. But there are a lot of kids who look at that and say, "If that's what science and technology has brought us to, what kind of world is this?" There are an estimated 55,000 pollution dumps around America with chemical wastes that are just polluting the soil and the water. That happens in every technological society. In Japan, the mercury

killed off all the fish. What I'm saying is that the capacity for destruction is very great and in facing how that happens, ultimately one is thrown back on: What do you stand for? What's your purpose in life? And the very process of asking those questions eventually gets to philosophical or spiritual issues. And there's just not enough of that being done in the Jewish community. It's very spotty, among most rabbis I know, because of the claims that are made on them by the families they serve -- to take care of personalist and family concerns. Consoling, pastoral, counselling kinds of things: Take care of my personal psyche. Help me keep myself emotionally together. Give my kids a good Jewish education and help them marry a Jewish boy or girl and that's your job. Very seldom will they take a guy who will compel them to face very hard questions like: What the hell kind of world are we living in, and what are you going to do about it? And what's happening in your business world? What about the moral corruption? And what about lawyers who are a bunch of crooks and thieves and what about doctors who are ripping off everybody and carrying on needless surgery? All of that kind of underground malaise in the society, very few people pay attention to it and ~~and~~ deal with it. It's a great need, a great opportunity, and it's greatly neglected.

I don't know what we're going to do to bring about that kind of change. I have to be careful how I say this. One of the reasons I got involved in Biafra in 1967 is because I didn't think that one could be a Jew, in the authentic sense of Jewish humanism, living in the world while tens of thousands of people are being massacred and you know it's happening, and say, "It's no concern of God's, it's no concern of yours. Tough luck. It's their problem." Also, when I was travelling around the country talking on campuses, I noticed

when I talked to kids about doing something for the Biafrans, the thing that happened to Jewish kids was a beautiful thing to see. They wouldn't know a Biafran if they fell over one. But the notion that because you were a Jew you had a responsibility for another human being, you had a responsibility for saving lives, and saving the society, became very often a transforming thing for them. And then I used to take part in some prayer sessions and we would choose selections from the Prophets or other readings which dealt with exactly that. Standing against oppression, standing for justice, caring for the widow, for the orphan, the suffering people, the stranger, redeeming captives. And they had a sense that being a Jew is the most authentic way of being real in the world. If that's what Jews have got at their fingertips, I want to buy into that, to be part of that.

I see it now in the Indochinese thing. I've probably gotten 200 calls since we started from Jews: I want to volunteer, I want to do something, I'll lick envelopes. It's there. There's an enormous, vast, untapped need. And part of ^{the} thing I've tried to do and do now in all my lecturing, is to make those connections between what I think is an extraordinary humanistic tradition, in which the dignity of human life, the saving of human beings is a governing idea. You're supposed to violate Sabbath and holy days to save human life. You're allowed to eat non-kosher food, in fact you're obligated to if it means saving a life. If an Orthodox woman is pregnant and only eating bacon will save her life, she must eat it, because the saving of her life is pre-eminent in the tradition.

My own sense is that's where the guts of any kind of Jewish renewal ultimately will come from. A lot of the stuff of _____ and Hassidic sects and pietistic sects is pretty and exotic but it

really doesn't have any staying power. Unless it's really related to the human condition, which is in agony -- I'm not talking about gas lines, I'm talking about a world that's threatened with its very survival, a world that could blow itself up right now, you don't have to build another ICBM, a world of mass starvation, pollution of the society, the disparities between rich and poor and the incredible idea that you can spend \$400 billion a year just to maintain armies, and there's no money for food.

I think that sense of how screwed up the world is, and that somehow you've got to find a way to take hold of it, to try to make some difference and change it, I think that's in the Jewish tradition and that can lead to a change. To put it succinctly, ^{if} I had my way and I hadn't invested so much of myself in this kind of career and had so many things I wanted to straighten out, including my own personal life, I would have thought seriously about organizing, maybe a decade ago, a world Jewish service organization, a kind of Jewish Peace Corps. Or a place where Jewish kids would study Jewish tradition, Jewish values, and ideals, where they'd learn how to pray together in a way that really was meaningful, not just rote, and then would go out into the world to translate those ideals into helping people, saving lives.

I keep running into Jewish kids who were formerly in the Peace Corps, and they were a very high percentage of Peace Corps volunteers. That says something about what Jewish kids are. In Thailand, I ran into a Jewish girl, working as a social worker with Cambodian refugees. She had nowhere to go in Jewish life. She came out of a conventional conservative family, Conservative synagogue. She ended up marrying an unfrocked priest, and their religion is helping refugees. And there's a very deep, spiritual, almost mystical quality

about what they're doing. A kind of love and caring that was just beautiful. They had such an incredible beauty about their lives. They were living with unbelievable simplicity -- one shirt, one pair of pants, one pair of sneakers, living on a few bucks a week. But they were living really fulfilled lives. I've seldom seen such unneurotic people. That sense of giving themselves to care for somebody else. They stopped worrying about every goddamned pimple on their nose and the thing that really counted was people whose lives were actually smashed, how do they heal them. That's a fantastic thing to see. And I think the Jewish community needs that. And we've got very little of it.

The Reform movement started something called the Mitzvah Corps, where they did something with the Indians in Mexico, and they got a number of kids involved, and it meant a lot to them. To some extent, I thought that Israel was doing that with its technical assistance program. It was politically and economically motivated, but they attracted a very idealistic corps of people who went into Africa and Asia. They were very attractive, really committed people. Anyway, that's the kind of bottom line where I come out on a lot of this. And to the degree that I can, whenever I bump into Jewish kids who are interested, I try to steer them in that direction. And it's a great thing to see. They get a whole new sense about themselves and where they're going and they feel that they're being Jews in the best sense of the word.

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