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Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 12, Folder 10, Bea, Augustin [Cardinal] transcript of
telephone conversation, 31 December 1964.

TRANSCRIPTION OF TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH CARDINAL
BEA BETWEEN 1925-1947 HOURS, ON DECEMBER 31, 1964,
BETWEEN ROME AND PARIS.

The Cardinal called in great urgency from Rome. When the conversation began it was evident from his tone that he was speaking with a deep unwontedly manifest anger, a sharp distress and a violent sense of urgency and crisis. At a certain point, the Cardinal dictated his words from written notes. The punctuation is added by the Speaker here, but the words are his. He added in side-remarks as he read from time to time, and these he indicated by the phrase usually "this is not in my notes"

S= Speaker,
B= Bea

- S Father, I wish to give you my warmest wishes for the New Year --
- B I also. But this is not the reason for this call.
- S I have an article which I wish to send to you with some other material.
- B If it is from the land of Israel, you have no need to send me the article. But you have need to listen to me carefully, because I have rarely been put in such an embarrassing and perplexing position. I presume you are referring to an article covering the visit of the 14th of September to the 4th floor?
- S Yes
- B This article has been the direct cause of the most embarrassing three quarters of an hour I have been called upon ever to spend in the Eternal City, besides hinting to me perhaps the ultimate catastrophe for many of my dearest plans. Listen, don't interrupt except to answer questions, and let me explain to you. From now on I am reading from prepared notes. Take it down, can you, so that there is no mistake about my attitude and about the gravity of the matter. Are you ready?
- S yes, Father
- B Very well. I was summoned this evening to the State and for an hour and half I was reproached with indirect authorship of this article or at least with complicity in it and the doings of the author. Were you behind this man and his article? Did you know of it?

S No, Father I was shocked

B State told me that the article has been read by the 4th floor and discussed by him with State. The 4th floor was angered and chagrined by the presumption of the tone used, the distortion of actual historical facts as he knows them, the implied slurs on Christianity, the puerile negligence of most worthy, most beloved, and most righteous men who spoke more authoritatively, more worthily, of their religion and their dignity than he ever did our seemingly could do, and lastly by the utter thoughtlessness of a man who has provided for his enemies the very type of material for which they are looking "who can say now that the Jewish document is not the direct product of Jewish pressures?" he asked State. Ach it was terrible and at this painful point in all my negotiations. (Thss not in my notes) The 4th floor told State verbatim "if I had followed the dictates of my mind and instincts after talking with this man, I would h ve arrested all further work on the Jewish document. I would have been spared this intense botheration State went on to repeat Dr Heschel was not invited by the 4th floor. He did not make any constructive or acceptable suggestion to solve the deadlock of Christian conversiondesires and Jewish repugnance. His most impressive contribution was the dedicace to the book-gift -- and this could not be his, it was too Christian And above all he broke his solemn word, this three times already This is infidelity and lack of ordinary human faithfulness to one's word.

I was reproached Evenafter I pointed out that I had been against the visit from the beginning and that I had insisted on a second party being present in order to have an independant witness to what was said and done, I was reproached with my connections with Albert Jean Camille.

S Albert Jean Camille has nothing and had nothing to do with the visit, Father, either in its origin, in its patronage or in its conduct and certainly nothing to do with this article at all.

B No matter Stae is convinced that Heschel and his visit was Albert Jean Camille inperson. The entire faithfulness of this man is ascribed totally to Albert Jean Camille You assure me that he was not behind it?

(S) S I assure you, Father, No again No.

(B) B Were you behind him in this article? This would be a supreme error on your part if you backed or encouraged him?

S I assure you solemnly under God, Father, I had nothing to do with the article and I have nothing to do with him at present

B Listen, my son, there are three things which I press on with all the urgency and necessity of great impending calamities primo that Albert Jean Camille not be privately or publicly associated with this irresponsible and incapable man and not aid him or commission him in any way or to any degree to further his own personal ideas, wishes and ambitions They cannot preserve themselves from disaster, otherwise. What stupidity! is he blind? or vain? or all two? (all this not in my notes)

Secundo that he be prevailed on to swallow his pride and for the sake of his people, for the sake of the document, for the sake of true religion, he impose on himself a strict silence in regard to this visit (which I have told you was a massive disillusionment) (this not in my notes) and in regard to the stupidity of this article and any bad effects it has. Silence is his only measure of prudence and wisdom now

Terzo that if there is a public tohuwabohu about this article, Albert Jean Camille disassociates himself solemnly and unmistakably from both author and article. I say 'if' (this last not in my notes). Have you got all that?

S Yes, Father

B This man's mouth must be shut definitively and now. He has put an instrument into the hands of our enemies. All they need do is translate the article and circulate it without commentary in the wide world. Besides unfaithfulness, there is crass, I say crass stupidity (this not in my notes). And State was almost happy at my embarrassment. Do you realize what a critical phase we are now entering. And this man gives us this fearful augury for 1965? (None of this in my notes)

S is there anything else to be done, Father?

B, Give this man no encouragement. No contact. Now I am speaking ad libitum. This could be worse than a Vardi incident. It will be translated and commented. He has no sense of propriety or proportion. He is a child playing with human dynamite. Another mistake like this and it will signal the end of all our hopes. Haven't we enough to contend with. You more than most others abroad know the prejudice that exists in high places against your friends. Please, please, help me and help them. By the way before I end up, reflect on further communication after your departure. And one last thing, do you know if Albert Jean Camille has a door to a Mr McBundy in the US? I am told that he has the ear of the strongest over there. Search in this direction. It might be very useful in the coming months.