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Box 84, Folder 14, King, Martin Luther, Jr, 1966-1967.

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Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Telephone 522-1420

KING, M.L.K. 1967
Southern Christian Leadership Conference

Martin Luther King Jr., *President*

Ralph Abernathy, *Treasurer*

Andrew J. Young, *Executive Director*

September 28, 1967

Mr. Morris B. Abram, President
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York

Morris
Dear Mr. Abram:

I am in receipt of your letter making inquiry of SCLC's position on anti-semitism. First, let me apologize for being rather tardy in my reply. Absence from the city and the accumulation of a huge volume of mail account for the delay.

Serious distortions by the press have created an impression that SCLC was part of a group at the Chicago Conference of New Politics which introduced a resolution condemning Israel and unqualifiedly endorsing all the policies of the Arab powers. The facts are as follows:

1. The staff members of SCLC who attended the conference (not as official delegates) were the most vigorous and articulate opponents of the simplistic resolution on the Middle East question. As a result of this opposition, the Black caucus modified its stand and the convention voted to eliminate references to Zionism and referred to the executive board the matter of final wording. This change was the direct result of the spirited opposition on the floor by Hosea Williams, Director of Voter Registration and Political Education of SCLC. Incidentally, I only attended the conference to make the opening speech and left immediately after. I had no part in planning the structure or policy of the conference, nor was I a delegate. If I had been at the conference during the discussion of the resolutions, I would have made it crystal clear that I could have supported any resolution calling for black separatism or calling for a condemnation of Israel and an unqualified endorsement of the policy of the Arab powers. I later made this clear to the press but a disclaimer seldom gets the attention that an original sensational attack receives.

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2. SCLC has repeatedly stated that the Middle East problem embodies the related questions of security and development. Israel's right to exist as a state in security is incontestable. At the same time the great powers have the obligation to recognize that the Arab world is in a state of imposed poverty and backwardness that must threaten peace and harmony. Until a concerted and democratic program of assistance is affected, tensions cannot be relieved. Neither Israel nor its neighbors can live in peace without an underlying basis of economic and social development.

At the heart of the problem are oil interests. As the American Jewish Congress has stated "American policies in the Middle East have been motivated in no small measure by the desire to protect the \$2,500,000,000 stake which U. S. oil companies have invested in the area." Some Arab feudal rulers are no less concerned for oil wealth and neglect the plight of their own peoples. The solution will have to be found in statesmanship by Israel and progressive Arab forces who in concert with the great powers recognize that fair and peaceful solutions are the concern of all of humanity and must be found.

Neither military measures nor a stubborn effort to reverse history can provide a permanent solution for peoples who need and deserve both development and security.

3. SCLC has expressly, frequently and vigorously denounced anti-semitism and will continue to do so. It is not only that anti-semitism is immoral--though that alone is enough. It is used to divide Negro and Jew, who have effectively collaborated in the struggle for justice. It injures Negroes because it upholds the doctrine of racism which they have the greatest stake in destroying. The individual Jew or gentile who may be an exploiter acts out of his greed as an individual, not his religious precepts--just as a criminal--Negro or white--is expressing his anti-social tendencies--not the ethical values of his race.

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On the general question of anti-semitism, I would like to quote a few paragraphs from my recent book WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

One fact is decisive for perspective and balance: the amount of anti-Semitism found among Negroes is no greater than is found among white groups of the same economic strata. Two polls cited by Professor Thomas Pettegrew and a very recent study in depth conducted by Dr. Oscar Lewis arrived at this same conclusion. These revelations should allay the alarm that has arisen from exploitation and exaggeration of the issue by some white and Negro publicists whose appetite for attention exceeds their attachment to truth and responsibility.

The question that troubles many Jews and other concerned Americans is why oppressed Negroes should harbor any anti-Semitism at all. Prejudice and discrimination can only harm them; therefore it would appear that they should be virtually immune to their sinister appeal.

The limited degree of Negro anti-Semitism is substantially a Northern ghetto phenomenon; it virtually does not exist in the South. The urban Negro has a special and unique relationship to Jews. On the one hand, he is associated with Jews as some of his most committed and generous partners in the civil rights struggle. On the other hand, he meets them daily as some of his most direct exploiters in the ghetto as slum landlords and gouging shopkeepers. Jews have identified with Negroes voluntarily in the freedom movement, motivated by their religious and cultural commitment to justice. The other Jews who are engaged in commerce in the ghettos are remnants of older communities. A great number of Negro ghettos were formerly Jewish neighborhoods; some storekeepers and landlords remained as population changes occurred. They operate with the ethics of

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marginal business entrepreneurs, not Jewish ethics, but the distinction is lost on some Negroes who are maltreated by them. Such Negroes, caught in frustration and irrational anger, parrot racial epithets. They foolishly add to the social poison that injures themselves and their own people.

It would be a tragic and immoral mistake to identify the mass of Negroes with the very small number that succumb to cheap and dishonest slogans, just as it would be a serious error to identify all Jews with the few who exploit Negroes under their economic sway.

Negroes cannot rationally expect honorable Jews to curb the few who are rapacious; they have no means of disciplining or suppressing them. We can only expect them to share our disgust and disdain. Negroes cannot be expected to curb and eliminate the few who are anti-Semitic, because they are subject to no controls we can exercise. We can, however, oppose them and have, in concrete ways. There has never been an instance of articulated Negro anti-Semitism that was not swiftly condemned by virtually all Negro leaders with the support of the overwhelming majority. I have myself directly attacked it within the Negro community, because it is wrong. I will continue to oppose it, because it is immoral and self-destructive.

Let me thank you for writing and also for your consistent support. I realize that this letter is long, but I hope it will shed some light on what can be an unfortunate misunderstanding.

Sincerely,

Martin
Martin Luther King Jr.

MLK/tr

NOV - 3 1967

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FROM THE

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E. 56 St., New York, N.Y. 10022, PLaza 1-4000

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK, October 10.... Martin Luther King Jr. today placed the Southern Christian Leadership Conference squarely against both black separatism and anti-Semitism, calling anti-Semitism "immoral" and used to divide Negro and Jew, "who have effectively collaborated in the struggle for justice." He added that the group he heads considered Israel's right to exist as a State "incontestable," and was opposed to "an unqualified endorsement of the policy of the Arab powers."

In a letter to Morris B. Abram, President of the AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, made public today by Mr. Abram, Dr. King denied earlier press reports that the S.C.L.C. was part of the group at the recent "New Politics" convention at Chicago that had introduced a resolution denouncing the "imperialistic Zionist war."

Dr. King, who made the opening address at the convention, had been asked about his stand by Mr. Abram and the presidents of nine other national Jewish agencies, all of them affiliated with the National Community Relations Advisory Council. These agencies had labelled as "anti-Semitic" the resolution, which reportedly had been forced on the "New Politics" convention by a minority "black caucus" of Negro delegates.

Dr. King explained to Mr. Abram in the letter that not only had he taken no part in planning the structure or policy of the convention nor was he a delegate, but the staff members of the S.C.L.C. who did attend were "the most vigorous and articulate opponents of the simplistic resolution on the Middle East question." As a result of the stand of the S.C.L.C. members, he added, "the black caucus modified its stand and the convention voted to eliminate references to Zionism and referred to the executive board the matter of final wording."

"If I had been at the conference during the discussion of the resolutions," Dr. King continued, "I would have made it crystal clear that

Mr. B. Abram, President; Philip E. Hoffmann, Chairman, Executive Board; Orrin Lehman, Chairman, Board of Governors; Nathan Aschmann, Chairman, Board of Trustees

Bertram H. Gold, Executive Director

-more-

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I could not have supported any resolution calling for black separatism or calling for a condemnation of Israel and an unqualified endorsement of the policy of the Arab powers."

Dr. King used the occasion of writing to Mr. Abram to call for "economic and social development" of the Middle East as the only way out of the area's current difficulties. The S.C.L.C. has repeatedly stated that the Middle East problem embodies the related questions of security and development, Dr. King stated, adding:

"Israel's right to exist as a State in security is incontestable. At the same time the great powers have the obligation to recognize that the Arab world is in a state of imposed poverty and backwardness that must threaten peace and harmony. Until a concerted and democratic program of assistance is affected, tensions cannot be relieved. Neither Israel / nor its neighbors can live in peace without an underlying basis of economic and social development."

Dr. King stated that the S.C.L.C. had "expressly, frequently, and vigorously denounced anti-Semitism and will continue to do so." He pointed out that anti-Semitism was "immoral," and was used to divide Negro and Jew, "who have effectively collaborated in the struggle for justice." Anti-Semitism "injures Negroes," he said, "because it upholds the doctrine of racism, which they have the greatest stake in destroying."

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No. 112

A, AA, AJ, NFL, NPE, NEG-A
NEG-B, COL, REL, P-CR

10/10/67

Following are the texts of the telegram sent by the Presidents of 10 Jewish agencies to Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and of the answering letter from Dr. King to Morris B. Abram, President of the American Jewish Committee, one of the signatories of the telegram:

To: Rev. Martin Luther King

Our organizations share a deep commitment to full equality in an integrated, plural society. We believe that its attainment demands action by a coalition of groups for accelerated and dramatic social change. We have admired and respected your advocacy of these goals and your leadership over the years.

Now we are profoundly distressed by the recent New Politics Conventions. The apartheid of the adopted structure and the lack of democratic procedure; the absence of any specific constructive program for the advancement of equal opportunity; the anti-Semitism in spite of disavowals; the irrational anti-Israel resolution; all are disturbing and destructive. We believe that they also are antithetical to everything you have stood for.

Because of your presence at the Convention, and the presence of your name on the National Council of the Conference for New Politics, we fear that these destructive positions may gain a show of respectability. We urge you to disassociate yourself publicly from the malevolence which found expression in the resolutions of the New Politics Convention.

We anxiously await your reply.

Morris B. Abram, President
American Jewish Committee

Jordan C. Band, Chairman
NCRAC

Dr. Maurice N. Eisendrath, President
Union of American Hebrew Congregations

Adolph Held, President
Jewish Labor Committee

Joseph Karasick, President
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations
of America

Rabbi Arthur J. Lelyveld, President
American Jewish Congress

Henry N. Rapaport, President
United Synagogue of America

Samuel Samuels, National Commander
Jewish War Veterans

Dore Schary, National Chairman
Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith

Mrs. Leonard Weiner, President
National Council of Jewish Women

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Sincerely,

/s/ (Martin)

Martin Luther King Jr.

FROM: American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry
55 West 42nd Street
New York, N. Y. 10036

CONTACT: Henry W. Levy
COMMITTEE: 515 Park Avenue
New York, N. Y. 10022
Tel. PL-2-0600

For Release: After Four P.M., Sunday, December 11th, 1966

Text of Address Delivered by

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING

speaking from Atlanta on a nation-wide telephone hook-up sponsored by the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, Dec. 11, 1966 at 4 p.m.

NOTE TO EDITORS: You have already received our release on the New York meeting at Cooper Union Hall from which Dr. King was introduced by Rabbi Israel Miller, national chairman of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry. This stenographic transcript of Dr. King's address, heard in 32 communities, was taken from the direct line telephone hook-up.

Text of Address

"Some years ago, John Donne wrote in graphic terms, "No man is an island entire of itself. Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. If a part be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as is the promontory world, as well as is the manner of thy friends or thine own self world. Any man's death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind. Therefore, never send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

"These challenging words affirming the interdependence and inter-relatedness of mankind are particularly relevant when we think of the plight of three million Jews in the Soviet Union. No person of good will can stand by as a silent auditor while there is a possibility of the complete spiritual and cultural destruction of a once flourishing Jewish community. The denial of human rights anywhere is a threat to the affirmation of human rights everywhere. Jewish communal life is deprived by the Soviet government of elementary needs to sustain even a modest level of existence and growth. In a form of society in which publishing, the operation of institutions, and the acquisition of facilities are under government control, individual initiative cannot substitute for state omissions and the result is a withered and restricted Jewish community.

"While Jews in Russia may not be physically murdered as they were in Nazi Germany, they are facing every day a kind of spiritual and cultural genocide. Individual Jews may in the main be physically and economically secure in Russia, but the absence of opportunity to associate as Jews in the enjoyment of Jewish culture and religious experience becomes a severe limitation upon the individual. These deprivations are part of a person's emotional and intellectual life. They

determine whether he is fulfilled as a human being. Negroes can well understand and sympathize with this problem. When you are written out of history as a people, when you are given no choice but to accept the majority culture, you are denied an aspect of your own identity. Ultimately you suffer a corrosion of your self-understanding and your self-respect.

"The official answers by the Soviet government assert that it is providing as much as the Jewish community actually desires. But there is abundant evidence that this is untrue. Unofficial answers that imply state security is involved, because Jews have international ties, are even more unsatisfactory. In the thirties when the Soviet Union was vastly less secure than it is today, it officially encouraged a flourishing of Jewish culture. The insensitivity of the Soviet Union on this question is properly a subject for criticism and protest. Without making it part of cold war politics, world opinion is justified in reminding them that they are repressing a cultural heritage that is world property. Jewish history and culture are a part of everyone's heritage, whether he be Jewish, Christian or Moslem. The Soviet Union must recognize the legitimate criticism that insists it accord fair treatment to its Jewish community. If that government expects respect for itself in the international community of nations, the sincere and genuine concern felt by so many people around the world for this problem should impel the Soviet government not only to effect a solution but to do so with all deliberate speed.

"In the meantime, let us continue to make our voices heard and our righteous protests felt. We cannot sit complacently by the wayside while our Jewish brothers in the Soviet Union face the possible extinction of their cultural and spiritual life. Those that sit at rest, while others take pains, are tender turtles and buy their quiet with disgrace."