



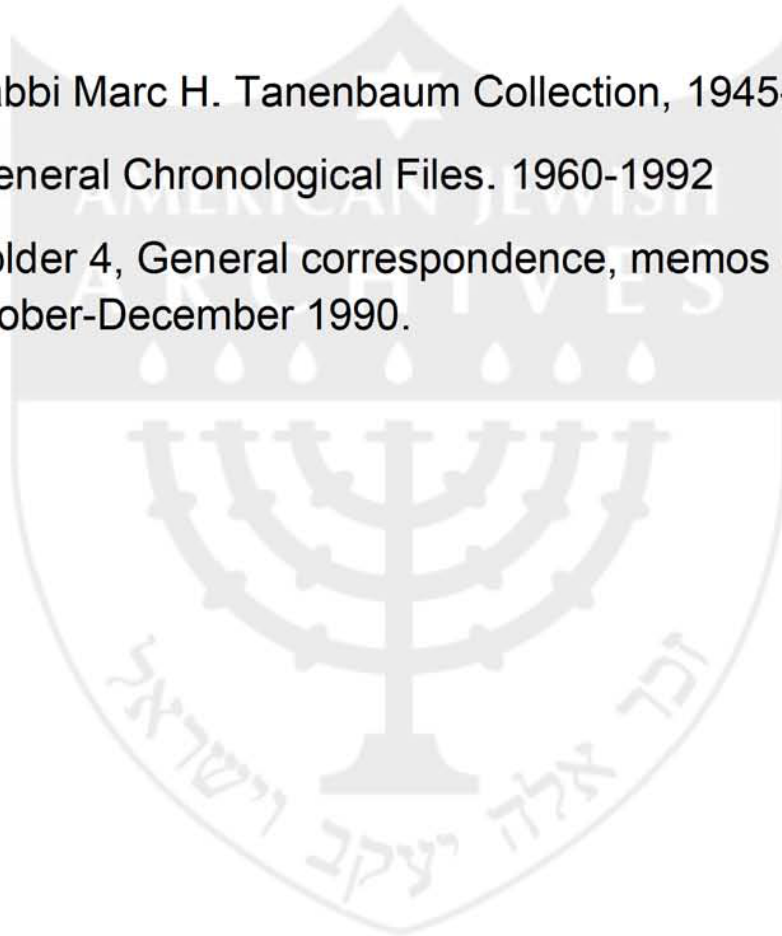
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE
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MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

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Box 104, Folder 4, General correspondence, memos & working papers, October-December 1990.



Marc H. Tanenbaum
45 East 89th St. (18F)
New York, New York 10128

October 9, 1990

Mr. Mike Levitas, Editor
OP-ED Page
The New York Times

Dear Mike,

You may not remember but we met several times,
albeit briefly.

My warmest congratulations on your assuming the
editorship of the OP-ED page. I am sure you
will do as impressively on this assignment as
you have with your other Times' roles.

October 28, 1990, marks the 25th anniversary of
the adoption by Vatican Council II of the historic
declaration that changed the course of Catholic-
Jewish relations around the world.

From the vantage point of working in this field
for more than 25 years, I have written an article,
"The Vatican, The Jews, and Demons."

It is somewhat longer than the usual OP-ED piece.
But I thought that if it made sense to you for
possible publication, I'd be prepared to edit or
rewrite it.

I would be interested in your reaction.

Cordially,



SCA/BCEIA Consultation

Wednesday, October 17, 1990

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Washington, D. C.

SCA Participants:

Rabbi Jack Bemporad, Co-Chair
Chairman, SCA Interreligious Affairs Committee
Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld, Co-Chairman SCA Interreligious Affairs Committee
Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Rabbi Jerome Davidson, CCAR, First President, SCA
Rabbi Joseph Ehrenkranz, RCA, Stamford, Connecticut
Rabbi Jerome Epstein, US
Rabbi Barry Friedman,
Mr. Gunther Lawrence, Program Chairman, SCA
Rabbi David Lincoln, RA, SCA U. N. Representative
Rabbi Henry Michelman, Executive Vice President, SCA
Rabbi David Saperstein, UAHC
Rabbi Jeffrey Wohlberg, RA
Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, RA
Rabbi Mark Winer, CCAR
Rabbi Alfred Wolf, CCAR
Rabbi Joel Zaiman, RA

Constituent Agencies, Synagogue Council of America:

Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR)
Rabbinical Assembly (RA)
Rabbinical Council of America (RCA)
Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC)
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations (UOJCA)
United Synagogue of America (US)

BCEIA Participants:

M. Rev. William H. Keeler, Archbishop of Baltimore, Co-Chair
Vice President, National Conference of Catholic Bishops
M. Rev. Norbert Dorsey, Bishop of Orlando
M. Rev. Joseph J. Gerry, O.S.B., Bishop of Portland, Maine
M. Rev. Basil Losten, Armenian Bishop of Stamford, CT
M. Rev. Alvaro Corrada, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Washington
M. Rev. James H. Garland, Auxiliary Bishop of Cincinnati
M. Rev. Edward Kmiec, Auxiliary Bishop of Trenton
M. Rev. William Newman, Auxiliary Bishop, Archdiocese of Baltimore
Rev. Michael McGarry, CSP, President, Saint Paul's College
Rev. John O'Connor, S.J., Ecumenical Affairs, Archdiocese of Washington, D. C.
Msgr. Royale M. Vadakin, Ecumenical Affairs, Archdiocese of Los Angeles
Dr. Eugene J. Fisher, Catholic-Jewish Relations, SEIA
Rev. John F. Hotchkin, Director, SEIA

Dates for Next Meetings:

March 6, 1991 - New York City
October 23, 1991 - Washington, D. C.

Minutes

MORNING SESSION: Archbishop Keeler presiding.

Minutes: A motion was made by Bishop Losten to approve the Minutes and the Agenda. The Minutes and Agenda were approved unanimously.

Bishop Losten: Motion to add anti-Christian bigotry in the United States to a future agenda. E.g., American Family Association.

I. Report on International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee, Prague, Czechoslovakia, September 3 - 5, 1990.

Archbishop Keeler: ILC is a joint international body. This was its first full plenary session since November 1985, though there had been ongoing relations and meetings in the interim.

Rabbi Bemporad: There were a number of meetings in Rome and Geneva prior to the Prague meeting. The procedure leading to the meeting was very important in guaranteeing its success; e.g., discussion re: the Auschwitz Convent in February 1990. The response of The Vatican was extraordinary, positive and reassuring. Also, their practical response in implementing structures to combat antisemitism was very strong.

When we went to Prague, our first act was to visit Theresienstadt, a concentration camp. It is impossible to describe or even to comprehend. There was a sense that this horror must be confronted directly by both communities, together. Solid papers on antisemitism through history and today were given. Then there were many moving testimonies of Jewish and Catholic survivors. The papers were serious, honest and open on both sides. The steering committee favored a statement of, on the Catholic side, *teshevah*, repentance, and mutual reconciliation. Antisemitism was labeled a sin. There were recommendations for establishing Jewish-Christian liaison committees throughout the world. The meeting was successful and warm. Archbishop Keeler played a key role, and we are grateful.

Archbishop Keeler: I want to express our appreciation for the constructive role played by Rabbi Bemporad's leadership and the American Jewish delegation, who carried the spirit of our meetings here to the international level. We are grateful also for Rabbi Bemporad's suggestion that the statement noted our work here in this country. Re: the selection of Prague: the statement made by the Czechoslovakian Conference of Bishops, in response to a request from Rome, was very strong in opposing antisemitism. The Bishops' Conference, meeting at the time, sent a delegation to our meeting. We were received by Cardinal Tomasek. This was symbolically important because of his stature as a heroic opponent of Communism during the years when priests were automatically jailed for performing acts of ministry.

We noted that the Catholic Church can act only in some Eastern European countries, not in all. We saw that in these, especially Poland, development and distribution of materials to foster improved understandings of Jews and Judaism among Catholics is already underway. Bishop Muszinski reported that here the words of the Pope have been crucial to opposing antisemitism. This meeting began the process of developing a statement of the Holy See on the Holocaust and antisemitism.

Rabbi Waxman: The Prague meeting was a resumption of meetings interrupted since 1985, because of several events. It carried forward the work begun in 1985 toward a major Catholic statement on the issue. Secondly, there was a great deal of apprehension in the Jewish group, in view of Cardinal Willebrands' retirement. I was greatly reassured by Archbishop Keeler's growing role and by Archbishop Cassidy's forthright responses, especially with regard to the theological affirmations flowing from the Second Vatican Council. He took a very heartening position throughout. We are back on track.

Dr. Fisher: I would like to acknowledge with appreciation the adequate nuancing of the papers on the Jewish side. They were clear and objective, but non-polemical. This allowed for the strength of the statement which emerged.

Rabbi Bemporad: Thanks to Gunther Lawrence for his strenuous efforts in difficult circumstances.

Rabbi Bretton-Granatoor: There was a unity of response among both Jews and Catholics that was extraordinary. During the High Holy Days, the Pope in receiving Polish pilgrims spoke of the Holocaust. Reading them after the Prague meeting, I felt a profound sensitivity on his part, perhaps facilitated by the Prague meeting.

Rabbi Winer: From the Jewish side, we appreciated the Catholic authenticity, especially of Bishop Muszynski of Poland, Fr. Dubois of Israel, and Dr. Hans Herman Henrix of Germany: "For the sake of the integrity of Catholicism, we must reckon with this history." We felt our difference as Americans in this European context. We have a sense of partnership as American Catholics and Jews that is remarkable. Our history is unique; our share history as immigrants is very similar, from nativism to discrimination. There was an absence in us of the depth of the bigotry present in Europe. We need to apply the insights and sharing that we experienced in Prague to our country. In all societies, there is approximately 12 - 15% of the population that is prejudiced and the same percentage who will strongly reject bigotry. How does one reject the former and reenforce the latter? Perhaps, together with Protestants, we should make a Prague-type statement here, including our opposition to anti-Catholicism. So, I support Bishop Losten's motion on this.

Rabbi Schonfeld: When I first arrived in Prague, I was a skeptic about whether things could improve. Now, I believe they can because of the Prague experience. The only problem is the inability of the groups to agree on Vatican relations with Israel. This is not just political but symbolic of a genuine regret for the past on the part of the Church. Outside of that, it was a very successful meeting.

Archbishop Keeler: There was some coverage of Prague in the Jewish press. The entire statement was carried to thousands of Catholic leaders by Origins, and carried also in the Catholic press.

II. Eastern and Central Europe

Archbishop Keeler: During the past year, Catholic philanthropic institutions have expressed great concern about the present plight of Catholics in Eastern Europe, where the Church infra-structure is in tatters after years of Communist rule. The NCCB/USCC has set up a Committee to accept requests from Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Europe. During the summer, this Committee, of which Bishop Losten is a member, traveled to Eastern and Central Europe for an on-site look.

A. Bishop Losten — Report on the Ukraine

The Committee formed three groups for the visits throughout Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union in August and September. In many of these countries, there was open persecution of the Church. The purpose of our visitation was to understand the situation and offer assistance to fellow Catholics. Except for Poland, they have little sense of direction on what to do with their new freedom. Our group visited Russia, Byelorussia, Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine, preceded by a visit to Cardinal Martini of Milan, President of the European Bishops' Conference. Cardinal Montini's message to us was: "Small is beautiful." The Russian patriarch was cordial and thoroughly Russian in his outlook. We did reestablish dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church.

In Ukraine, many churches are being reclaimed. Across-the-board there is minimal friction between the religious groups, such as the Catholics and the Orthodox in Ukraine. The new political party, very popular, displays the Star of David with other religious symbols. We have translated and printed 500,000 copies of Nostra Aetate in Ukrainian to distribute next week in Ukraine. I am happy to see that leaders of Pamyat got five years in prison in Moscow, which remains the trend-setter in the USSR, though the grassroots are becoming quite creative in seeking independence from Moscow.

Rabbi Lincoln: There were positive developments in Ukraine. Pamyat attempted to enlist the Ukrainian nationalists, who threw them out of town. So too is Lithuania rejecting antisemitism.

Archbishop Keeler: It is helpful that Bishop Losten of our group is on that Committee promoting Catholic-Jewish relations as part of the process.

Rabbi Wohlberg: The depth of religious freedom in those countries is very moving. We in the Jewish community are similarly rebuilding on the basis of a depth of suppressed but extant allegiance.

Rabbi Schonfeld: A footnote: Prague saw the possibility of bringing things to the level of the parishes in Eastern Europe. But we must think also of the U. S., e.g., Buchanan's claim that "they" ("the Jews") insulted "my Church and my Pope." Could Pat Buchanan be approached on this?

Archbishop Keeler: This fits under the mentioned anti-Catholicism category, since it is a perception of such by an individual. We have followed up on getting the Prague statement to every parish.

Bishop Losten: These people have not been taught any Christian principles for over forty years, hence this urgency of exposing bigotry. There are great resentments between Czechs and Slovaks, and it is worse in Jugoslavia.

Archbishop Keeler: The Bishop of Romania told me he was not sure how well the young understand what is at stake. Next year there will be an extraordinary Synod of European Bishops in Rome on the new situation in Europe, which will provide an opportunity for assessing the overall state of things.

III. The Middle East

Dr. Fisher: The NCCB statement on the Middle East is well known and provides a framework for approaching contemporary events. Our reactions to current events should be understood within this larger framework.

Archbishop Keeler: It is a matter of record, but not of controversy.

Dr. Fisher: That is because it is in fact quite representative of Catholic attitudes.

Rabbi Bemporad: Again, the process of developing the NCCB Statement was quite helpful. At the time, however, I felt its major defect lay in its belief that the time was ripe for negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. We felt, on the contrary, that the time is not ripe. It was a mistake to decontextualize the issue from the overall Mideast peace with Israel. There was no clarity that the PLO was not intimidating Palestinians who wanted peace. In August, one Palestinian was killed by the Israeli Army, seventeen by the PLO.

If we look at the Iraqi invasion, my feeling is that these events reinforce our earlier judgment. The real issue is not Israel and the Palestinians, but the larger picture, including Saddam Hussein. Arafat himself cannot control PLO factions (e.g., beach attack) and is an ally of Saddam Hussein. On the one hand, we have to stop Hussein where he is. But on the other, Kuwait must be freed and Hussein prevented from using chemical and nuclear weapons in the future. Saddam uses the Palestinians as a propaganda issue, linking it with the occupied territories. This linkage must be resisted.

Rabbi Waxman: There needs to be a clarification of position on both sides, as the recent Western Wall incident illustrates. One can be critical of a given government. But Israel does have a government which has policies. A young man from my congregation was there. Few were hurt by the rocks, but the fact of the still-uncertain pattern does not obviate the issues. The issue is what is the position of this body and the Catholic Church toward Israel. Gas masks are, by perceived necessity, being distributed only in Israel. We feel the circumstances are extremely threatening for Israel.

The President of the United States some months ago referred to East Jerusalem as "occupied territory." This, again, increases Jewish apprehension, eating into the soul. This perception that Jerusalem is "occupied territory" is behind the U. N. resolution. This is the time for an affirmative statement.

I was on T.V. last week with Father John Morley, who said privately that there are plenty of Catholic clergy who still have theological problems with Israel. Clearly, this is still an issue which you have not resolved. How much less the political issue? Just what are the political issues? Archbishop Cassidy said in the beginning we wanted Jerusalem an international city. This has been abandoned. We need religious rights, to which I replied, "You have those," which he acknowledged. Is there a fear of Arab reprisals? Then say so.

We also have Jewish problems. There is a lot of false messianism floating around. There is a proper political stance supporting Israel. We Jews need clarification of the unmitigated commitment of the Catholic Church to the existence of Israel, theologically and precisely what the political issues are.

Archbishop Keeler: Our process for making statements is rather unwieldy. But the affirmations in the NCCB Statement and from the Holy See are quite clear and in position. I thought we were, and also in Rome in 1987. Our Statement did not put the issue simply "Israel/Palestinians" but "Israel-Arab States-Palestinians" as its frame, so Rabbi Bemporad's critique seems to us to miss the point of what we were trying to say.

Speaking of fear of reprisal, we saw this among Catholics in the area.

Rabbi Waxman: Your statement did view the peace process in terms of the Arab States as well as the Palestinians. This was commendable. Yet, Europe and the United States helped Iraq develop its chemical and other weapons. There needs a more affirmative, less tentative statement of solidarity with Jewish fears.

Rabbi Schonfeld: I was assigned to discuss the St. John's Hospice. There was a historic meeting between Cardinal Bea and Rabbi Soloveichik.

Do Jews have a right to live in Israel? Yes.

Do Jews have a right to live in Jerusalem" Yes.

Do Jews have a right to build a Temple? Not sure.

If we do not have that right, then we have nothing. The Jewish people are very angry with the U. N. Who is judging us? China? Columbia?

I have a letter from Cardinal O'Connor expressing a perception of concern among Christians. There has been a distortion. The fact is that the building was leased to Jews. It is now before the Supreme Court to see if it is legal. There are theological objections by the Church to Israel's existence. At a general audience the Pope asked for people to pray for "the Holy Land, the Christian communities, and the people living there." Why no mention of Jews?

Archbishop Keeler: My understanding is that the Pope did make reference to Jews in his full text in Italian. When we spoke to the Orthodox and Protestants as well as Catholics in Israel, there is a sense of being restricted, of second class citizenship. E.g., again, Bethlehem University. Many have moved out.

Rabbi Schonfeld: So are Israelis!

Archbishop Keeler: Yes, with regard to St. John's Hospice, we feel a deep symbolic significance, which will remain until resolved, hopefully, by the courts. Archbishop Sabbah's pastoral letter is very important for understanding Christian sensitivities. Dr. Fisher will get it for you.

Rabbi Lincoln: Israel has many reasons to be angry with the U. N. The real problem with the Statement is the phrase, "the political rights of the Palestinians," where the traditional phrase, "legitimate rights," had heretofore been used in this context.

Dr. Fisher: Re: Whether the theological issues of Israel remain unresolved for the Church, Roma locuta est. Individual Catholic priests notwithstanding, it is simply not true to allege, as Rabbi Schonfeld has done, that "there are theological objections" to a Jewish State in Eretz Israel. There are none. That is not the problem, though very serious obstacles remain, especially the disposition of the occupied territories, including Jerusalem.

Rabbi Wolf: It is important to understand our sense of deja vu with regard to Israel's plight today.

Rabbi Saperstein: All Jews agree that if the Arabs thought they could destroy Israel, they would do so. That is the Jewish filter. Whatever the technical statements and nuances of the Holy see, for Jews the issue of formal recognition is the test of recognition of Israel's (and therefore the Jewish people's) right to exist. When Moslems threw stones at Jews worshipping on Sukkoth at the holy site of the Western Wall, the world was silent.

Rabbi Saperstein: Among ourselves, we differ on talking to the PLO, on Israeli policies in the West Bank, and on St. John's Hospice. What Rabbi Schonfeld says is true, as is what Archbishop Keeler said. Many Jews publicly reacted to the issue very sharply in support of such evident Christian pain in the affair.

Archbishop Keeler: As Rabbi Waxman mentioned, the facts about the positive things done by the government of Israel are not coming through the press, nor are those of the Church.

AFTERNOON SESSION

Rabbi Bemporad Presiding

IV. U. S. Secretary of Education, Lauro Cavazos, Receives the BCEIA/SCA Statement, "A Lesson of Value"

Secretary Cavazos: I am very supportive of your position. Part of the problem is that people mix specific religious values and fundamental values. Recently, I gave a talk on this subject at the University of Virginia. This is a difficult issue to get in front of educators. I would like to hear some ideas and discussion. I would add that we in the federal government have zero authority. When the Department was created, this was clear. We have authority in gathering data, etc., and spreading through persuasion. There are 16,000 independent school systems in the United States. But we can push ideas. I would like to commend you as a group for coming together on this vital issue, with which many teachers are struggling.

Rabbi Bemporad: The two people who wrote the document are here.

Bishop Newman: I can update our discussion. On June 19, we had a press conference in Baltimore. Subsequently, we heard much response, as listed in the memorandum which I distributed. In view of this, we may need to broaden the discussion to include the Protestant community as well. The memo reflects what we heard in Maryland from boards of education across the country, as well as from various national organizations and some universities who have done studies on it.

From the private community, there are some research centers and institutes listed which provide materials, and foundations which will offer financial support for these efforts. The Kennedy Foundation has published a textbook, "Growing Up Caring."

Secretary Cavazos: This was the group that organized the institute on the subject at the University of Virginia, at which I spoke.

Rabbi Zaiman: It has been suggested that our Chairs appoint a joint committee of clergy and educators for follow through to give advice on how to implement the statement. If, Secretary Cavazos, you have a person who can help us with how those school systems may best be contacted.

Secretary Cavazos: Contact Dr. John McDonald, Assistant Secretary of Education, at our office with regard to elementary and secondary education.

Archbishop Keeler: In terms of practical follow-up, we have a Department of Education at the USCC. Bishop Hughes is on that committee. We should get our staff specialists together with the Synagogue Council's relevant committees as to follow-up.

Archbishop Keeler (cont'd):

We should also encourage the involvement of other churches. I did this in Baltimore. I suspect there would be similar interest in other parts of the country as well.

Rabbi Zaiman: We should develop models and share with Protestants on the local level.

Archbishop Keeler: I concur.

Secretary Cavazos: Archbishop Schulte of New Orleans is on the President's Commission and can be helpful.

Rabbi Schonfeld: We should see the curriculum of the national Jewish day schools.

Rabbi Bemporad: How do you perceive the issues, Mr. Secretary?

Secretary Cavazos: There is a tremendous resistance out there to this idea. Teachers tend to play it safe, resulting in a valueless education. There are six national goals agreed on by the President and the fifty state governors. One sees the necessity of parents as pre-school teachers, including teachers of values. The other national goals deal with the drop-out issue, academic excellence, first in the world in science and math, adult literacy, and sixth, freedom from drugs and violence. So you might think about how these six goals relate to your efforts.

We are undergoing an enormous restructuring of our educational and secondary systems, which are failing. This opens possibilities. I want to thank you for our leadership on this.

Rabbi Epstein: We agree on the importance of values education. But the mediators, the teachers, are not held in high esteem. How do you raise the level of the teaching profession?

Rabbi Wolf: We of the Skirball Institute of the American Jewish Committee are working on a project to tie together public schools with youth organizations such as the Girl and Boy Scouts, etc., to fashion a values educational program. We can use this project as a laboratory for that effort.

Secretary Cavazos: The question of teacher education is right on target. Another need is bilingual teachers. Many young people want to be teachers today. In Wisconsin, they are giving vouchers to go to private (but not religious) schools. In New Orleans, there is some funding for parochial school children to use computers at public schools.

V. Pornography

Miriam Whiting: Introduced statement on pornography from the Holy See's Council on Communication (included in packets).

Archbishop Keeler: This is our policy stance, with a view toward a joint statement like that on "Moral Values in Education."

Rabbi Bemporad: In prior meetings, what was discussed was related to the values in education discussion. My experience is in attempting to rehabilitate abused girls enticed

Rabbi Bemporad (cont'd):

into pornographic films. Those films exploit and further abuse these girls, many of whom are put on drugs to make them compliant. No one should be forced to indulge someone else's evil inclination. The filth on MTV that I have seen denigrates women and romances violence, death, and being chained to it, etc. To the extent the porn industry uses people, we should try to do something. I am concerned also for freedom of speech. We don't want to infringe the First Amendment in any way. But we have standards on the depiction of women, etc., that can be articulated.

Rabbi Ehrenkranz: What you are talking about, the usage of human beings, does not, in itself, entangle with free speech.

Rabbi Michelman: I like the suggestion for a subcommittee on this. We do need to steer clear of the First Amendment while upholding morality. Some years ago, several of us were invited to Cardinal O'Connor's home for an interreligious discussion of this. Cardinal Bernardin and Eileen Lindman were also present. We worked very hard with NCAP, calling ourselves "RAAP" (Religious Alliance Against Pornography), but we remained concerned about infringement of the First Amendment and found it a difficult thing. We share the viewpoint of the pastoral response handed out. We need to be careful about what actions we call for.

Rabbi Waxman: I remain a member of RAAP. The group is mainly evangelical. They set the tone. The issue is a significant one: sexual, violence, and other forms of pornography. Our voice, collectively, ought to be heard. But where do you draw the line? We must not leave the issue solely to those who don't have the same institutional and ideological restraints. We should have legal advice as appropriate.

Archbishop Keeler: We saw in the "Moral Values" statement that the fact that we said it together was very meaningful to many people. In Pennsylvania, we had all the Christian denominations together. "Morality in Media" has classes for attorneys. In all cases I found great attentiveness to the First Amendment and to existing laws. We also did one nationally with the Lutheran bishops. Ms. Whiting, has our USCC legal staff done research?

Ms. Whiting: We do have an attorney on staff competent in this field.

Bishop Corrada: We deal also with the very sensitive communications media. This is noxious traffic.

Rabbi Schonfeld: Some things cry out for action; e.g., the change of ratings from "X" to "NC17," and also the Maplethorpe exhibit. I support having a small committee to deal with these situations.

Rabbi Saperstein: By definition, pornography and obscenity are not protected by the law. The problem is -- What is it? Who does decide? This statement from the Holy See takes the Potter Stewart approach: "I can't define it, but I know it when I see it." Thus, we need to give some guidance on this. We must also note the political context: The Helms and other controversies over funding, etc. This context needs to be taken into account in framing our approach.

Bishop Garland: The Cincinnati prosecutor has been, up to this case, quite successful. Also, we might say something on NC17. We do not censor, but as religious leaders, educate to a healthy understanding of sexuality. This relates, then, to our first statement.

Ms. Whiting: Our USCC Department of Communications came out strongly against NC17.

Rabbi Bemporad: Subcommittee approved by consensus. Members:

Archbishop Keeler: Appoint Bishop Corrada and Ms. Whiting. Thanks to her.

Rabbi Bemporad: Appoint Rabbi Schonfeld, Rabbi Michelman and Rabbi Bemporad.
(Bishops Garland and Kmiec to be added to this committee.)

VI. The Middle East (Continued)

Archbishop Keeler: We appreciate this mornings' interventions. We need to see what the central positions are and what is more topical, colored by a specific event. Would like to see Archbishop Sabbah's pastoral distributed to you. Second, could you prepare a statement articulating Jewish concerns to share with Archbishop Mahony? Third, perhaps our respective staffs could prepare a backgrounder on our differing perceptions of events in Israel and the occupied territories.

Dr. Fisher: (Reading rest of CNS article on the Pope's talk): As a Catholic, I read this much more inclusively than Rabbi Schonfeld did. It does mention Jews. It is not helpful to the discussion to force negative interpretations on Catholic statements.

Rabbi Waxman: Regarding ongoing Jewish concerns: There is a real need for more a more formal statement on the Vatican level (the U. S. bishops did so) of the centrality of Israel in Judaism. Between what is regarded as your statement and what is perceived by the Jewish community is a gulf which needs to be bridged.

VII. Other Matters

Rabbi Wolf: Re local implementation (e.g., Pope John Paul II to the American Jewish Committee in May). Our joint sessions here have done a tremendous amount of good, but on the national level. Between now and the next meeting, a small group should consider ways to stimulate local dialogues.

Rabbi Saperstein: Re: The Peyote case, which overturned the standard court test on government prohibition of religious activities. The whole spectrum of the Jewish community and NCCC-USA, would like legislation to return the traditional test. Will Catholics gain?

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Eugene J. Fisher
Associate Director for
Catholic-Jewish Relations, SEIA

Rabbi Henry Michelman
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October 26, 1990

TO:
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM
c/o JEWISH WEEK

Your analysis of anti-Semitism as psychopathology requiring deep-seated therapy (Jewish Week, October 19) is without question a valuable insight. In the long term, it clearly offers the best hope for coping with an age-old plague.

But in the short term, where we all live, there is value too in what you correctly label "surface repair," an area where you have done yeoman work.

A suggested avenue to such surface repair is enclosed, deriving from the kind of self-interest motivation which underlies the rise of free-market movements.

Curiously enough, the Jewish contribution to society which I focus on is highlighted on the reverse side of the very page containing your Jewish Week article.


Milton Sutton

AN ALTERNATE STRATEGY AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

Does the rise of market-driven forces in the world economy point to a possible strategy for combatting the forces of anti-Semitism?

The basic assumption underlying the free-market system is that, given the opportunity, people everywhere act and buy in accordance with their own self-interest.

What then is the self-interest of the average middle class American in rejecting anti-Semitism and in favoring fair treatment for Jews?

Currently, Jewish organizations are doing a laudable job in uncovering and denouncing anti-Semitism whenever it crops up. And no doubt the general impression among the public is that such religious bigotry is somehow wrong. But a much stronger reaction against this wrong would stem from the perception that a threat to the role of Jews in our national life is a threat to the personal benefits Americans derive from Jewish contributions.

Even a cursory survey of these benefits would include major advances in the key fields of science, medicine, economics and education, among others.

An obvious--and emotional--example is the Salk vaccine. Every American parent today is spared the anxiety and pain inflicted by polio on the previous generation.

With health care so prominent among our national concerns, the Jewish contribution to medicine alone is ample reason for an upgraded image of Jews.

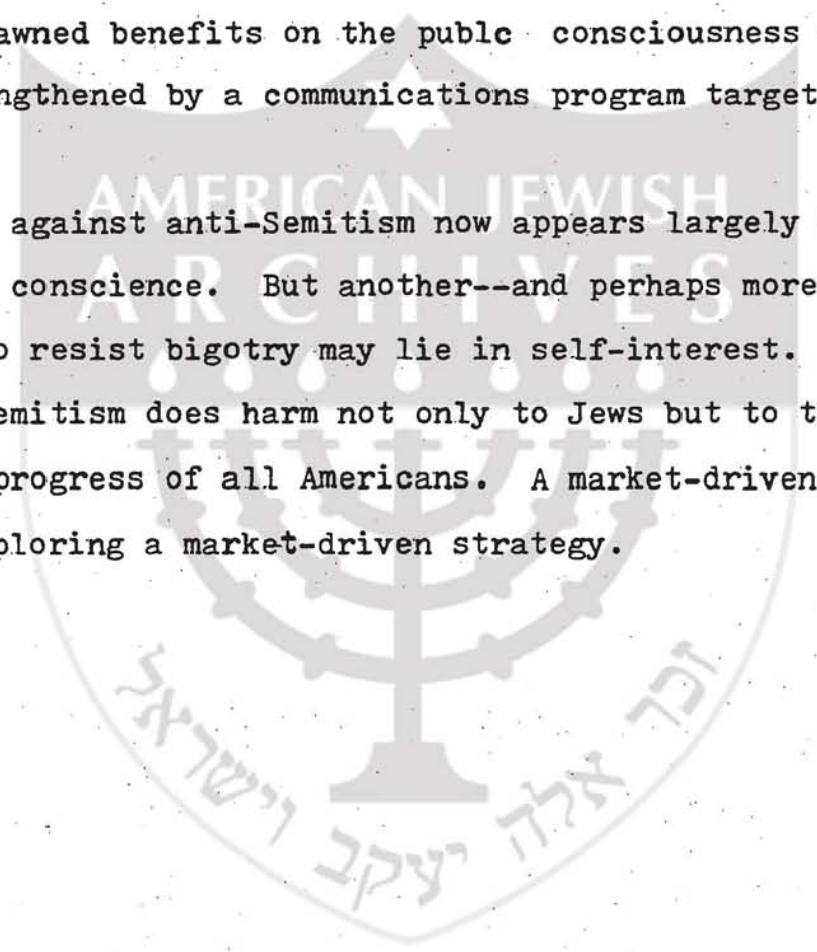
We are in a period when the United States is under siege by foreign competition and when recession looms ahead. It may therefore be all the more timely to highlight those Jewish achievements in science and technology which yield productive advantages to our industry. (Note

the number of Nobel Prizes won for America by Jews). In the sensitive area of jobs, Jewish enterprise in many fields has brought new employment opportunities for thousands, if not millions, of our citizens.

True, many people already know much of this. But as those of us in advertising and public relations have learned, there is a wide gap between back-of-mind and front-of-mind awareness. The impact of Jewish-spawned benefits on the public consciousness can be greatly strengthened by a communications program targeted to this objective.

The effort against anti-Semitism now appears largely based on an appeal to conscience. But another--and perhaps more powerful--motivation to resist bigotry may lie in self-interest.

For anti-Semitism does harm not only to Jews but to the material welfare and progress of all Americans. A market-driven society calls for exploring a market-driven strategy.



The Auschwitz Convent Controversy

Historic Memories in Conflict

Judith Hershcopf Banki



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The author wishes to express appreciation to Bishop Henryk Muszynski, president of the Polish Episcopate's Commission on Dialogue with Judaism, for his careful reading of this article in draft form, for his thoughtful suggestions and his enthusiastic endorsement; to Sr. Carol Rittner, co-editor of *Memory Offended* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1991), a volume of essays on the Auschwitz convent controversy of which this essay will be a part, for her encouragement; and to Rabbi A. James Rudin, the American Jewish Committee's director of interreligious affairs, for his always helpful and sensitive suggestions.



From the beginning, the conflict around the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz had some of the surreal and inexorable quality of a nightmare, in which seemingly mundane events are invested with awesome significance. There was a pervasive sense of some advancing menace and of powerlessness to stop it. To a number of Holocaust survivors, the menace was the convent itself -- seen as both a threat and a provocation. To those actively involved in the field of Jewish-Christian relations, who had been cheered by -- and in many cases had contributed to -- the substantial progress toward mutual understanding and rapprochement achieved in recent decades, the menace was the unraveling of that progress, as incomprehension and resentment hardened into anger and outrage on both sides. This dreary-looking building, made sinister by the uses to which it had been put by the Nazi overlords of the Auschwitz death camp, became again sinister as a symbol of conflict and confrontation.

In the end, the controversy became a kind of witches' brew, threatening to boil over and poison the surrounding atmosphere. This potent stew had everything in it: clashes of historic memory; conflicts of religious and ethnic identity, particularly between Jews and Polish Catholics; unreconciled views on how the suffering of these victimized peoples should be memorialized. Every issue of potential conflict between communities whose past interaction was remembered very differently by each side, every possible clash of identity and self-perception, came together on this issue. In short, just about everything that could go wrong went wrong.

That is, almost everything. In fact, after a series of escalating conflicts, we were pulled back from the brink, as it were, by a combination of forces: first and foremost, by a core group of Catholic, other Christian, and Jewish leaders on both sides of the Atlantic who had come to trust one another over the years and who worked diligently and faithfully to keep the channels of communication open and the dialogue going during the most difficult of moments, among them members of the American hierarchy and a number of Roman Catholic sisters; second, by some courageous voices in Poland; and ultimately, by the public intervention of the Vatican itself.

These developments have given all parties some welcome breathing space. During this period, it is important to examine the crisis around the convent at Auschwitz as a kind of case history. We must make an effort to learn from this crisis, both for the sake of the past, to honor the memory of the innocent men, women, and children murdered at Auschwitz -- over 90 percent of them killed for the "crime" of being born of Jewish parents -- and for the sake of the future, to establish bonds of kinship and communication and to summon the courage to confront a painful history together.

A brief review of the events as they developed may provide a framework for understanding why the convent set off so much passionate argument on both sides. Even at this stage, not all the facts about the installation of the convent in its present location are known. Even were the facts agreed upon, total objectivity might not be possible: each community will look at the convent from the perspective of its own history. With every effort toward fairness, this review will perforce examine the developing crisis through Jewish eyes.

The precise origins of the convent remain unclear. It has been frequently noted that the present pope, when he was still archbishop of Cracow, expressed the desire that there be a place for prayer and meditation at Auschwitz. Apparently, the Carmelites of Cracow were given permission by the Polish government to occupy a building on the outer edge of the camp some time in 1984. Originally intended as a theater but never used as such, the building was used by the Nazis to store supplies, particularly the Zyklon-B gas used in the gas chambers.

Jews were neither consulted nor informed about this decision, and only learned about the convent the following year, through the circulation, in Belgium, of a fund-raising brochure produced by an organization called "Aid to the Church in Distress." The brochure called the convent Catholics' "gift to the Pope . . .," claimed "the Carmelites do penance for us who are still alive," referred to "the victorious power of the Cross of Jesus," and predicted the convent would become "a spiritual fortress, a token of the conversion of brothers from various countries who went astray." The reference to the conversion of "brothers who went astray" was probably aimed at lapsed Catholics and was not intended to convey conversionary intentions toward Jews, but regardless of intentions, the language was so triumphalistic and insensitive that its negative impact was predictable. The brochure also described the convent as a compensation for the "outrages" which had been visited upon the pope. Again, neither the "outrages" nor the pope were specified. Some Jews assumed the author was aggressively defending Pius XII against any possible criticism of his actions during the Second World War. More likely, the author was expressing his own anger at a less-than-enthusiastic reception accorded John Paul II during a papal visit to the Low Countries in 1985. But again, the language was provocative and its effects predictably unfortunate.

This fund-raising brochure had an explosive effect on the Jewish community, first of Belgium and later throughout Europe. There was no mention anywhere in the document that Auschwitz was the primary place of systematic murder of Jews during the Holocaust. In fact, there was no mention of Jews at all. The impassioned nature of the conflict which ensued is partly explained by the way in which the presence of the convent became known on the public scene. And since the language of the brochure was future-oriented, it was not clear to those who began protesting the installation of the convent that it was already in place, that the nuns were already there and had there been for over a year.

It must be noted that the tone and content of the fund-raising tract drew intense criticism from a variety of Christian sources, as well as from Jews, including the Christian members of the Amitié Judéo-Chrétienne of France. Criticism of the installation of the convent itself was more measured, but Cardinal Albert Décourtray, archbishop of Lyons, declared: "It is the attempt to totally exterminate the Jews that we call the Shoah,¹ of which Auschwitz is the symbol. Such affliction and suffering has conferred on the Jewish people, through its martyrs, a particular dignity that is quite properly its own. And to construct a convent at Auschwitz would, for me, impinge upon that dignity."

The intensity of the Jewish response -- which was virtually unanimous -- apparently caught Cardinal Franciczek Macharski, archbishop of Cracow, in whose diocese Auschwitz-Birkenau falls, off balance. A church leader sincerely interested in Christian-Jewish rapprochement who had visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, he viewed the convent as a token of reconciliation. He was apparently astonished to discover that Jews viewed it as an act of appropriation. In an article in the Polish Catholic weekly *Tygodnik Powszechny*, editor Jerzy Turowicz noted that Auschwitz "is also a symbol of the martyrdom of the Polish people during the Nazi occupation," and asked, "Do these two symbols really have to divide our two nations?" Mr. Turowicz had previously demonstrated sensitivity to the feelings of Jews and had called for an examination of Polish anti-Semitism; his was a friendly question

¹ In Europe, the term "Shoah" is more frequently used, in the United States, the term "Holocaust." Both terms will be used in this article, in accordance with normal usage.

with no hostile intentions. Nevertheless, it was on this very question that the struggle was joined. From a Jewish perspective, the Polish church had acted unilaterally to stake out a claim to the place that both summarized and symbolized the destruction of European Jewry. The Jews' sense of bewilderment and betrayal was very real. Their protests mounted in intensity.

Efforts to resolve the conflict led to a "summit meeting" held July 22, 1986 in Geneva, Switzerland, between members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy from France, Belgium, and Poland and rabbinic and communal leaders of French, Belgian, and Italian Jewry. Out of this meeting came a moving recognition of the special significance of Auschwitz for Jews and a promise that reconstructive work on the convent would be halted. Jewish leaders interpreted that promise as the first step in relocating the convent, but when additional nuns were reported to have moved into the building and when workmen and supplies were seen entering the building on a regular basis, they feared a resolve to keep the convent at its present site.

The protests, both Jewish and Christian, continued, leading to a second Catholic-Jewish "summit meeting" (Geneva II) held February 22, 1987, which appeared to have ended the impasse. A nine-member Catholic delegation which included four cardinals and members of various national bishops' commissions for relations with Judaism, and a nine-member Jewish delegation which included the chief rabbi of France and European representatives of national and communal Jewish organizations, agreed on a declaration and a program of action.

By calling Auschwitz "the symbolic place of the Shoah," reflecting the Nazi aim of destroying the Jewish people "in a unique, unthinkable, and unspeakable enterprise," and at the same time calling attention to "the sufferings of the Polish nation" during the same period, sufferings which demand "profound respect and devout meditation," the Catholic and Jewish leaders wished to honor the feelings of both Jews and Polish Christians and still point to the uniqueness of the "final solution" -- the Nazi program to annihilate all Jews.

The program of action called for the creation of a center for "information, education, meeting and prayer" to be established "outside the area of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camps." The center, a Christian initiative, was to be carried out by the European churches, with Cardinal Macharski overseeing the implementation of the project in Poland and the bishops of other countries undertaking the fund-raising to realize the project within a two-year period. (Since the project was later mislabeled an "interfaith center," with the implication that the Jewish community had first assumed and then abandoned responsibility for supporting it financially, it is important to stress that it was assumed by all present and described at the outset as entirely a Christian-sponsored project.)

The aims of the new center, spelled out explicitly in the appended document, were basically to encourage exchanges on the Shoah and on the martyrdom of the Polish and other peoples during World War II; to combat trivialization and revisionism regarding the Shoah; and to encourage Jewish-Christian dialogue. Two points of the agreement were particularly salient in view of later developments: one, albeit expressed in very recondite language, that the Carmelite sisters would be housed in the new center upon its completion; two, a clear commitment that there would be "no permanent Catholic place of worship on the site of the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps."

As noted, this agreement appeared to have resolved an increasingly tense and painful controversy, which had tempers flaring on both sides. It was greeted with enormous relief in the Jewish community. A conference between representatives of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jewish People and representatives of Jewish organizations -- once postponed because of uncertainty regarding the relocation of the convent at Auschwitz -- was rescheduled for February 23, 1989, the day after the new center was to have been completed.

Needless to say, the so-called deadline came and went without so much as the breaking of ground for the new center. The approaching deadline prompted a flurry of correspondence between some of the parties who had signed the "Geneva II" declaration in an effort to show some indication of progress toward the implementation of the agreement, but without success. For some in the Jewish community, the failure to implement the agreement was regarded as a deliberate rejection of a solemn commitment; others, who still retained confidence in the goodwill and good intentions of their Roman Catholic cosignatories, nevertheless found it hard to swallow the lack of concrete results, and even harder to restrain the activists in their own community.

On July 14, 1989, Avraham Weiss, an activist Orthodox rabbi from Riverdale, New York, and six rabbinical students scaled the walls of the convent in a protest demonstration; the group was attacked, roughed up, and forcibly ejected by Polish laborers working within the convent. The incident received major press coverage and further exacerbated already bruised feelings on both sides. On August 10, Cardinal Macharski publicly announced that he was suspending the project, and that the delay was due to "a violent campaign of accusations and defamation" on the part of "certain Western Jewish circles."

Cardinal Macharski's retreat from the agreement to build the new center occasioned additional criticism. The American Jewish Committee termed it a "unilateral rejection of the very process" through which Catholic-Jewish understanding had been achieved in recent years. Tension was brought to a head by the Roman Catholic primate of Poland, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, in a sermon delivered at the Polish national shrine in Czestochowa on August 26. Cardinal Glemp issued an attack on the Jewish community which, to Jews, seemed laced with the themes of traditional anti-Semitism. He claimed that Jewish protests against the convent were an "offense to all Poles and a threat to Polish sovereignty"; he accused Jews of talking down to Catholics as if from a position of superiority; he suggested that the protesters had come to physically attack or murder the nuns; and he accused Jews of power over the world media. (Subsequently, he claimed that the Geneva II agreement should be renegotiated because its original signatories were not "competent," a claim that obviously offended Cardinals Decourtray, Lustiger, and Daneels; they responded by defending the agreement and asking, "If four cardinals, including the archbishop of Cracow, are not qualified to represent the Catholic side, who might be?")

The responses by other Roman Catholic church leaders to Cardinal Glemp's intemperate outburst may well have been unprecedented in recent history. Officials of the American hierarchy were quick to disassociate themselves from his remarks. Cardinal John O'Connor of New York called Glemp's remarks "distressing and harmful"; Archbishop Roger Mahony of Los Angeles associated himself with that criticism; Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston urged the Carmelites to move from the present site; Cardinal Edmund Szoka of Detroit called for the honoring of the original agreement. Moreover, within Poland itself, Glemp's comments were criticized by the newspaper of Solidarity, and the Polish Episcopate's Commission on Dialogue with Judaism called for the honoring of the agreement and the building of the new center. Finally, on September 19, the Vatican ended the impasse by endorsing the 1987 accord, supporting the idea of the new center and volunteering its own funds toward its construction. Since that time, Cardinal Glemp himself has endorsed the agreement.

On February 19, 1990, ground was broken for the new building. Cardinal Macharski and representatives of the Polish government attended the ground-breaking ceremony. In March 1990 an American Jewish Committee leadership delegation visited the construction site. Despite remaining uncertainty about when the Carmelite sisters will move to their new quarters, and despite some remarks attributed to the superior of the convent which are replete with traditional anti-Jewish stereotypes, the black mood of the summer of 1989 has been lifted. Both sides have been granted an opportunity for bridge-building. Can we learn something from the bitter struggle around the convent at Auschwitz?

Some elementary observations come to mind. First, the Jewish people did not deliberately choose Auschwitz as the sign and symbol of the Nazis' "final solution" out of some conscious desire to deny the

suffering of other peoples. If Jews had wanted in some conscious and systematic way to find a place whose name would not have competed with the tragic memory of Poles or other victim communities, they would have chosen another death camp. Alas, there were more than one: factories of horror, conceived, designed, and built entirely or largely to murder Jews. Had the choice been deliberate, Belzec, Birkenau, Treblinka, or Maidanek could have served as well. But the name Auschwitz gradually came to represent the Holocaust, through the recorded memory, the literature and poetry of powerful writers, through repetition, the sanction of time, and the determination of the Jewish people not to forget. It is a terrible irony that the same place and the same name also came to represent for Polish Christians their own suffering and martyrdom under Nazi occupation, and that for Poles Auschwitz is a national shrine.

The other side of that proposition is also true. Polish Catholic authorities did not deliberately install the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz in order to deny or usurp the uniqueness of the Holocaust for Jews. They may be faulted for insensitivity, for failure to anticipate the impact of the convent on the minds and hearts of the Jewish community or even to think about Jews in connection with Auschwitz. Their decision undoubtedly revealed a failure of imagination and empathy, but it was not based on malice. There was no conspiracy on either side to deny or "steal" the historic experience of the other. As the conflict heated up, other, more nationalistic and anti-Semitic voices could be heard, claiming Auschwitz for Poles alone. But this was clearly not Cardinal Macharski's original intention.

Second, it has become clear that most Polish Christians still have no idea that over 90 percent of the people killed at Auschwitz were Jews. They are well aware of their own losses, and they learn in visits to the camp that "human beings" were shipped from every corner of Europe to Auschwitz to be gassed there: Dutch and French, Belgian and Greek, Romanian and Hungarian, Ukrainian and Italian. They do not learn that almost all of these were Jews, for many non-Jews were killed at Auschwitz. But only Jews were gathered from every nation in Nazi-occupied Europe as part of the plan to totally annihilate them as a people, down to the last infant.

Third, most Poles were surely not aware that the building granted to the Carmelite sisters was within the confines of the UNESCO "patrimony" of the Auschwitz camp as defined by World War II maps and as agreed to by the Polish government itself in 1972.

Fourth, because opposition to the convent was originally mobilized and led by Jewish civic or communal groups, including Holocaust survivors, there was a widespread misconception among Christians that religious Jews had no problem with the location of the convent, that it was the activism of "secular" Jews that was responsible for the mounting agitation. As late as the summer of 1989, a distinguished professor at a major Roman Catholic university in Europe commented in a private conversation, "It is the secularist forces in the Jewish community who are opposed to the Carmel. If we could only have a dialogue with rabbis or with representatives of the Orthodox community, I'm sure we would see eye to eye." The incursion of (Orthodox) Rabbi Weiss and his students may have put an end to such speculation, but in any case the comment itself represented a serious misreading of the Jewish community. In his assumption that the convent would be accepted and welcomed by all "religious" people because it was a place dedicated to prayer, the speaker showed that he gravely misunderstood the nature of the Jewish community and underestimated how deeply European Jews had been offended by the establishment of the convent at Auschwitz.

Did American Jews react the same way? At the outset, no. News about the convent's establishment and the circulation of the fund-raising brochure did not arouse the same instantaneous and near-unanimous protest among Jews in the United States that it did in Europe. The issue was slow to surface. Several reasons have been advanced for this difference in reactions. For one, European Jewish communities, decimated and demoralized after World War II, had grown in strength and self-confidence in the intervening years, and wished to resolve what they considered to be an essentially European problem. Moreover, they wished to show themselves as an effective third force in the world

Jewish community, along with the Jewish communities in the United States and Israel. (It is interesting to note, for example, that no American Jews were invited to participate in the Geneva Catholic-Jewish "summit meetings," and no American Jew was a signatory to the 1987 agreement.)

Another reason for the lesser impact of the convent controversy in the United States may well have been the relatively benign history of Catholic-Jewish relations in this country. Despite a pre-Vatican Council II legacy of anti-Jewish teaching and preaching and despite pockets of Catholic anti-Semitism in the recent past -- the radio broadcasts of Father Charles Coughlin are an instance -- the Roman Catholic church in the United States has never persecuted Jews, as contrasted with the situation in Europe, where the church used its power to oppose civil and religious rights for Jews, including the basic right of citizenship. A memory of the sporadic, but intense, hostility of the church to Jews and Judaism is part of the historic consciousness of Jews who are aware of their history, but in the United States that remembered hostility has been partly offset by a more positive experience of interreligious understanding. The United States never had a national religion or an established church, and Jews had the right of citizenship from the beginning of American nationhood.

Moreover, Roman Catholics, as a minority within the nation as a whole, had themselves been targets of prejudice and discrimination. Mutual victimization does not necessarily guarantee mutual sympathy, as Jews and Polish Catholics discovered in their own conflict over the Auschwitz convent, but the American experience of constitutional protection of religious liberty, separation of church and state, and the multiplicity of religions, cultures, ethnic groups, and languages succeeded in defusing or at least moderating some of the prejudices and hostilities that sometimes intensified into group violence in Europe.

Given these differences, and given also the progress in Christian-Jewish relations achieved in recent decades through the burgeoning interreligious dialogue, the Jewish community in the United States was not particularly excited about the convent when the story first came to light. Concern grew slowly, but it did grow. And when it became apparent that the terms of the Geneva agreement had not been fulfilled and that the promised center had not even been begun, the issue became a salient one in the United States as well. The meeting between Vatican and Jewish organizational representatives (most of the latter from the United States) scheduled to begin on February 23, 1989 -- one day after the supposed completion of the center -- was canceled. A strong sense of betrayal, of mistrust based on broken promises, surfaced in the Jewish community.

What, after all, were the underlying issues? Why did the establishment of a convent at the edge of the Auschwitz death camp send shock waves through much of the Jewish community of Europe? As several well-meaning commentators asked, what was wrong with a dozen or so nuns praying for the souls of *all* the victims, and for peace and reconciliation for all humanity? What, indeed? How can one understand a nasty "turf" battle over a place where so many people suffered and died?

The critical issue for those who opposed the convent in its present site was the ultimate question of how the Holocaust would be remembered. In essence, they argued along the following lines: It is some forty-five years since the gates of the death camps swung open and revealed the horrors perpetrated there. There are very few witnesses left and even fewer survivors. Forty-five years from now, when there are none left, who will be seen as the primary victims of the Nazi ideology of hatred -- Jews or martyrs to Christian faith?

This passionate concern about whether the story of the Holocaust would be told without Jews seems, on the face of it, paranoid, but it is rooted in somber realities. Both in Europe and in the United States, we have seen the growth of an entire industry of denial. Ideologues claiming the title of "historians" have claimed that the death camps were not death camps, that the gas chambers were used to fumigate, not to kill. One half of the Jewish people of Europe died during the Nazi period, the

overwhelming majority by systematic murder, torture, and starvation. It is difficult to imagine the rage and agony of a people who, having sustained these losses, are now told that it didn't happen.

Beyond the deliberate denial, based quite clearly on anti-Semitism,² is another layer of denial, not intentionally anti-Semitic, but almost as destructive to Jewish morale -- obfuscation of the fact that Jews were targeted for annihilation only because they were Jews. Until very recently, it was possible to visit Auschwitz, see the facilities, learn how many "human beings" were gassed and burned there, and not be informed that almost all of them were Jews and were killed for that reason. It is reported that the informational plaques have now been changed.

The sense that their own history had been denied them was compounded for the survivors by the fact that Catholic devotion at Auschwitz has tended to focus on two figures of great significance for the church, St. Maximilian Kolbe and Edith Stein. Without denying their profound importance to Catholics, these figures of necessity send an ambiguous message to Jews. St. Maximilian, a Roman Catholic priest who offered his own life in exchange for that of another prisoner in Auschwitz and who perished in the other man's stead, was an authentic martyr. During his lifetime, however, he was also the editor of a journal which published anti-Semitic articles, and the revelation of this information understandably created some consternation among Jews. Was it not possible, some asked, to find a Polish hero to canonize who offered a more positive role model for Catholic-Jewish relations?

The other figure was and is even more problematic for Jews. Edith Stein, a Jewish woman who converted to Christianity, became a Carmelite sister and perished at Auschwitz after being deported from a convent in the Netherlands, has been beatified by the church as a "martyr to the faith." Yet she was dragged away from the convent, shipped to Auschwitz, and gassed there not because she was a Carmelite or a Catholic, but because she was born a Jew. The authenticity of her conversion is not at issue; Edith Stein was a conscientious convert to Christianity. It should also be noted that the Nazis had stepped up deportations of Catholics of Jewish origin because the Dutch bishops refused to be silent about these deportations. Still, she was killed as a Jew, and thus seems to Jews a particularly inappropriate symbol of Jewish-Christian reconciliation.

And after all this, and after the agreement to relocate the convent had been signed in Geneva, the erection of a large (over twenty feet high) cross near the site of the convent added fat to the fire. Its defenders were quick to point out that the cross marked the place where a group of Polish partisans had been machine-gunned by German troops during the war. Yet they never questioned why a cross seemed the self-evident symbol of heroic Polish resistance to military occupation. Was it not possible that the German soldiers who carried out this execution also considered themselves Christians? Certainly to Jews, the cross is preeminently a religious symbol, representing Christianity. It is precisely this identification of Christianity with Polish patriotism and national pride that has made the controversy around the Auschwitz convent so painful to both sides. Cardinal Glemp's comment that Jewish protests against the convent offended "all Poles" and jeopardized Polish "sovereignty" were instructive in this regard, revealing how closely religion and national identity were intertwined in his thinking. Indirectly, he appeared to be saying that to be a Pole, one needed to be a Christian -- presumably, a Catholic -- and that Jews could not be "real Poles."

Demonstrably, more than one agenda was discernible in the convent controversy and more than one history needs to be explored and understood. There is a history of Christian-Jewish -- more cogently in this case, Catholic-Jewish -- relations to be honestly faced. The Reverend Edward Flannery, first secretary of the United States Bishops' Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations, has observed that

² Many sympathetic non-Jews are unaware of the extent to which denial of the Holocaust is a deliberate stratagem of anti-Semitic organizations and individuals, and so they may view the determination of the Jewish community to memorialize that history as a kind of neurotic obsession.

Christians have "torn from their history books the pages the Jews have memorized." Despite substantial progress in mutual knowledge and understanding, this is still true. Most Christians remain largely unaware of the church's record of hostility to Jews and Judaism; they have never been taught that many of the measures they associate with secular anti-Semitism, such as confining Jews to ghettos, forcing them to wear distinctive clothing, denying them certain professions and livelihoods, and limiting their access to education through quotas, all had their precedents in church legislation. They are probably also unaware that the use of the cross as a logo by political movements, parties, and organizations before World War II usually had deliberate anti-Semitic intent.³ Innocent of this history in both deed and knowledge, they tend to interpret Jewish protests against the Auschwitz convent as a kind of gratuitous animosity against the Christian faith.

There is also a Polish-Jewish agenda which needs to be explored free of rancor and mutual recrimination.⁴ A Task Force on Polish American-Jewish American Relations, cosponsored by the American Jewish Committee and the Polish American Congress, has conducted a dialogue along these lines for over ten years in the United States and has made admirable progress in overcoming stereotypes and suspicions. Yet pockets of mutual ignorance and resentment remain, partly rooted in vastly different recollections of the relationship between the two communities in prewar Poland. Polish-American ethnic leaders may recall how well the Jewish minority fared and how well the two groups got along. Jewish participants may remember discrimination, persecution, and violence. These memories must be reconciled.

Healing the wounds torn open by the bitter conflict around the Auschwitz convent will require the recovery of a common history and a common memory. It will require patience and goodwill on both sides, and a capacity for identifying with the experience and memories of others. Jews should realize how fragile is the sense of Polish sovereignty and for how brief a period of recent European history Poles were allowed to control their own destiny. Jews should also question for themselves whether a historical memory based only or primarily on recollections of victimization -- what has been termed the "lachrymose theory" of Jewish historiography -- serves the interest of truth or wise communal policy. For their part, Polish Christians should realize that in addition to and separate from their own very real agony under German and Soviet occupation, there is a legacy of Polish anti-Semitism that needs to be acknowledged and addressed on its own terms.

Addressing these issues is at the heart of the reconciliation process. Nothing can replace or make up for the innocent lives lost during the Nazi Holocaust. For Jews those losses include a million children murdered and the destruction of entire communities, centers of learning, scholarship and spiritual creativity. But at least something would be gained if out of this senseless destruction emerged a commitment to finally confront and put an end to anti-Semitism, the world's oldest and most persistent pathology of group hatred. Rightly or wrongly, the organized Jewish survivor groups came to believe that the convent at Auschwitz, taken together with the tendency to ignore the specificity of Jewish victims

³ Milton Himmelfarb recalls the story of a YMCA secretary, sent on a relief mission to Europe after World War I, who was introduced to Admiral Horthy, then regent of Hungary. Horthy asked what the initials YMCA stood for. On being informed the Young Men's Christian Association, he extended his hand warmly and declared, "Delighted to meet another anti-Semite."

⁴ Clearly, the responsibility for confronting anti-Semitism is not addressed uniquely to Poles. The persistence of this virulent pathology is apparent in the recent outbursts of anti-Jewish violence and rhetoric in many parts of Europe, Western as well as Eastern, but it is particularly troubling to see this ancient hostility flourish as an adjunct of the rising nationalisms that have emerged as Soviet hegemony and Communist ideology appear to be crumbling in Eastern Europe. The issue also has special poignancy for Polish-Jewish relations because of the heavy concentration of Jews in Poland until World War II and the fact that a high proportion of American Jews trace their families' origin to that part of the world. To see the old charges of conspiracy rise again, to see Jews blamed for the political problems and economic dislocations in a country where almost no Jews are left -- in short, to see anti-Semitism without Jews -- is a sobering reminder of the task before us.

in the exhibits and lectures given inside the camp, together with the focus on Catholic martyrs to the faith, signified a de-Judaizing of the Holocaust and thereby a neglect of the underlying issue of anti-Semitism.

A final observation is in order. There is both hope and irony in noting that the Polish Episcopate's Commission on Dialogue with Judaism, headed by Bishop Henryk Muszynski, called for the upholding of the Geneva II agreement and the building of the new center even as Cardinal Glemp was repudiating the agreement. To even appear to take issue with the primate of one's country, particularly given the popularity and influence of the church in Poland and the highly volatile nature of the convent issue, constituted an act of courage. It should be acknowledged as a powerful affirmation of hope. The irony -- with absolutely no reflection intended on members of the Polish Bishops' Commission, who have demonstrated goodwill and good faith -- is that such a commission should have come into existence now, after the Holocaust. A few thousand Jews, mostly aged and infirm, remain from what was previously the largest, most creative, intellectually and spiritually vital Jewish community in Europe. One cannot help but ask what might have been the outcome had there been a serious, sustained, church-sponsored Catholic-Jewish dialogue in Poland before the Nazi onslaught. Granted, it was a different time, a different church, a different Jewish community, and speculation along such lines will yield no certainties. But the question itself should spur all involved in this painful controversy to put its resolution to the service of mutual understanding and reconciliation. Hopefully, the new center to be constructed near, but not on the grounds of, Auschwitz will provide a hospitable environment for such efforts. That was its original intention -- a place for study, for the exchange of information, for dialogue and encounter, a place for Christians and Jews to work together to combat trivialization or denial of the Holocaust. Is it not a goal worth all our efforts?



Appendix

GENEVA II

Declaration adopted at the meeting of dignitaries of the Catholic church and Jewish leaders in Geneva on 22 February 1987

Having recalled the terms of the declaration of 22 July 1986 recognizing that Auschwitz remains eternally the symbolic place of the Shoah which arose from the Nazi aim of destroying the Jewish people in a unique, unthinkable, and unspeakable enterprise,

In the common desire to ensure respect for the memory of the dead in the places where Nazi crimes were perpetrated and, in particular, where the extermination of the vast majority of the Jewish communities of Europe was carried out,

Recalling this dramatic period which also demands profound respect for and devout meditation upon the sufferings of the Polish nation at this time and in this place,

The undersigned are in solemn agreement on what follows:

1. The Catholic delegation declares that, taking a stronger sense of its responsibilities toward future generations, it undertakes to embark upon a project, to be carried out by the European churches, which will create a center of information, education, meeting and prayer. This center will be established outside the area of Auschwitz-Birkenau camps. To this effect steps have already been taken to involve the Catholic churches in Europe and all other churches likely to support this project. Its aims will be:
 - a) to encourage exchanges between the European churches on the subject of the Shoah and also on the martyrdom of the Polish people and other peoples in Europe during the totalitarian horror throughout the war of 1939-1945
 - b) to combat disinformation and trivialization of the Shoah, and to combat revisionism
 - c) to receive groups of visitors to the camps to complete their information
 - d) to encourage colloquia between Jews and Christians
2. The establishment of this center is the continuation and the consequence of engagements undertaken at the meeting of 22 July 1986 in Geneva. It implies that the Carmelite's initiative of prayer will find its place, confirmation, and true meaning in this new context, and also that due account has been taken of the legitimate sentiments expressed by the Jewish delegation. There will, therefore, be no permanent Catholic place of worship on the site of Auschwitz and Birkenau camps. Everyone will be able to pray there according to the dictates of his own heart, religion and faith.
3. The Catholic delegation specifies that Cardinal Macharski is to oversee the implementation of this project, while the bishops of other countries undertake to raise the means for its realization within the period of twenty-four months. Cardinal Macharski will keep President Theo Klein informed about

progress in the realization of this project.

4. The Jewish delegation takes note of the foregoing undertakings made by the Catholic delegation.
5. Both delegations are conscious of having conducted their dialogue in a common desire to emphasize the uniqueness of the Shoah within the tragedy of the Hitler era which has so cruelly affected the peoples of Europe and in particular the Polish people, and to ensure respect for the identity and the faith of every man and woman, both in their lifetime and at the place of their death.

Signed by all participants in the meeting:

The Catholic Delegation

Cardinal Godfried Danneels, Mechelen-Brussels
Cardinal Albert Decourtray, Lyons
Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, Paris
Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, Cracow
Msgr. Kazimierz Jan Gorny, Auxiliary Bishop of Cracow
Father Bernard Dupuy, Paris, Secretary of the French Bishops' Commission for Relations with Judaism
Father Jean Dujardin, Paris, Member of the French Bishops' Commission for Relations with Judaism
Father Stanislaw Musial, Cracow, Member, Polish Bishops' Commission for Relations with Judaism
Mr. Jerzy Turowicz, Cracow, Member, Polish Bishops' Commission for Relations with Judaism

The Jewish Delegation

Le Gran Rabbin René Samuel Sirat, Chief Rabbi of France
Maître Theo Klein, President of the European Jewish Congress and of the Conseil Représentatif des Juifs de France
Dr. E. L. Ehrlich, European Representative of B'nai B'rith International
Mr. Sam Hoffenberg, Delegate of B'nai B'rith at UNESCO
Maître Markus Pardes, President, Comité de Coordination des Organisations Juives de Belgique
Dr. Gerhard M. Riegner, Co-Chairman, Governing Board of the World Jewish Congress, Delegate of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations
Professor George Schneck, President, Consistoire Israélite de Belgique
Professor Ady Steg, President, Alliance Israélite Universelle
Mrs. Tullia Zevi, President, Union of the Italian Jewish Communities

FROM THE DESK OF

More —
the Paper! —
arranged job with
well done!

Larry

LARRY PHILLIPS

PHILLIPS - VAN HEUSEN CORPORATION

1290 AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10104 / (212) 541-5200

OFFICE OF THE CHAIRMAN

November 5, 1990

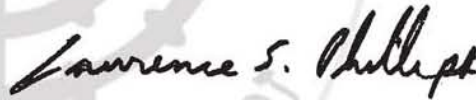
Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
45 E. 89th Street
New York, NY 10128

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

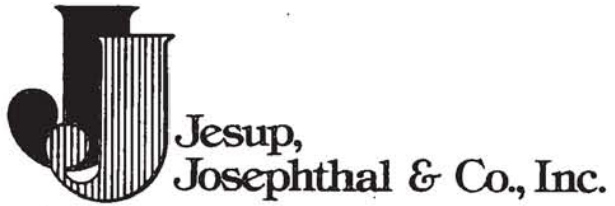
I am today sending instructions to Jessup, Josephthal & Co. to transfer to the American Jewish Committee 105 shares of Conner Peripherals stock as my donation for this year. For your records, the stock closed today at \$23-3/4.

This gift will be transmitted to you by Jessup, Josephthal & Co as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence S. Phillips". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the typed name.

Lawrence S. Phillips



Established 1877

November 7, 1990

American Jewish Committee
c/o Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
45 East 89th Street
New York, NY 10128


Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

I have been instructed by Lawrence Phillips to transfer
and ship to you 105 shares of Conner Peripherals.

The current price is 23 3/4.

If I can be of further service, please call.

Respectfully yours,


Michael Hirsch
Manager

mr

FROM THE DESK OF

Marc -



Please forward

Thank -

I see you on

12/3 -

<

LARRY PHILLIPS

NY N2469448

NO. 2469448

We Have This Day Debited Your Account

11/20/90 823-20056-1-4 *****\$2,572.00

C/B

11/26/90-

Philips - Van Heusen
Fdn.

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\$ 5,572

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One Whitehall Street
New York, N.Y. 10004
(212) 709-8000

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OF NEW YORK**
45 Wall Street New York, N.Y. 10005

Marc H. Tanenbaum
45 East 89th St. (18 F)
New York, New York 10128

November 30, 1990

Mr. David Harris
Executive Vice-President
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 Street
New York, N. Y. 10022

Dear David,

As I indicated during our telephone conversation, I am delighted over your election as executive vice-president of the AJC and wish you and your colleagues everything successful and good.


In my first letter to you, it gives me much pleasure to transmit to you two checks amounting to five thousand five hundred and seventy two dollars.

This is a contribution from my dear friend, Larry Phillips, who has made it a practice over the years to send me his contribution to AJC earmarked for the work I was doing in interreligious and international relations.

I have sent Larry a personal note of appreciation. I am sure you will want to acknowledge his gift for AJC.

When you are settled down in your new role, I would be happy to have a chat with you. One of the urgent things I need to talk to you about is the diminished state of my AJC pension which is making life difficult for me.

All the best!



PHILLIPS - VAN HEUSEN
FOUNDATION, INC.

1467

PAY TO THE ORDER OF American Jewish Committee Nov. 26 19 90 1-103/210
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Panela N. Hosten
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11/20/90

Amount

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PAY
To The
Order Of
• AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
45 EAST 89TH STREET
NEW YORK NY 10128
•

Authorized Signature

AS Marshall

Authorized Signature

Two signatures required for amounts in excess of \$50,000

⑈02469448⑈ ⑆021001318⑆ 19 00 22 6⑈

(Draft, Sept.7,'90)

XXVth ANNIVERSARY OF "Nostra aetate"

Rome, November 14-15, 1990

Wednesday, Sept. 14th

(private session)

At the Pontifical Council for Chr. Unity:

h. 10,00 am - "The ~~XXXXX~~ Meaning and Impact of
Nostra aetate 4 on the Catholic-
Jewish Relations"
(Participants: 20 + 20 delegates)
High Roman Authorities/
List of people for suggestions
to be invited, from the IJCIC
Greetings - Archb. CASSIDY
Introduction
Card. WILLEBRANDS
Speakers: Bishop ROSSANO
... (Jewish Speaker)
DISCUSSION (Moderator/-s ...)

h. 13,30 LUNCH

h. 16,00 DISCUSSION (continuation)
Closing: S. REICH

At the Lateran University: PUBLIC EVENT
~~XX~~

h. 18,00 Greetings: CASSIDY , REICH
Card. KONIG: "Perspectives and orientations
for the future of the Catholic-
Jewish relations"
(Jewish Speaker): "... "
QUESTIONS?
Closing - Hebrew Songs? (Hinneh ma tov...)

Truesday, Sept. 15th

h. 10 or 11 am At the Pont. Council (preparations to the
Pont. audience)
h. ... Vatican Palace -
Introduction: CASSIDY
Greetings: REICH
Speech of the Holy Father
(participants: only the 20+20 special invited to the
private session of Sept. 14th)

JEWISH PARTICIPANTS

CATHOLIC PARTICIPANTS
(provisional)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12
- 13
- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20

- Card. Willebrands
- " Konig
- " Ratzinger?
- " Etchegaray/or Bish. Mejia
- Archb. Cassidy
- Bishop Duprey
- Bishop Rossano
- Archb. Laghi, President of the Congr. for Cath. Education
- Mons. Gatti
- Bishop Ablondi/Father Feldkammer (Catholic Biblical Federation)
- Father Vanhoye (Pontifical Biblical Commission)
- Dr. Henrix
- Fr. Dupuy
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- ...
- Fr. Fumagalli



The following details are important to you;

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Prague 6

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ALCRON HOTEL

Stepanska 40, Prague

Phone: (42-2) 235-9216
Fax: (42-2) 235-0506

TELEPHONE NUMBER OF JEWISH COMMUNITY (office of Mr. Svoboda)

(42-2) 231-8559

The meetings of the ILC will take place at the SCIENTIFIC TECHNICAL ASSOCIATION (a building which previously belonged to the Jewish Community; there is still hebrew writing on the facade.) The Address is SIROKA 5, 100 meters around the corner from the Jewish Rathaus adjoining the old historic Jewish Cemetery.

Please note that the bus for Theresienstadt will leave on Monday morning, September 3rd, at 8 a.m. (promptly) from the Jewish Rathaus.

PARTICIPANTS IN ILC MEETING

- 1) Leon Abramowicz (Paris)
- 2) Prof. David Berger (Brooklyn College, CUNY)
- 3) Rabbi Jack Bemporad (Chairman, Interreligious Affairs, SCA)
- 4) Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor (Dir., Interreligious Affairs, UAHC)
- 5) Herbert Berman (UOJC)
- 6) Martin C. Barell (Chairman, Board of Governors, SCA)
- 7) Dr. E.L. Ehrlich (Dir., Continental European B'nai Brith)
- 8) Prof. Saul Friedlander (Tel Aviv University)
- 9) Prof., Rabbi Leon Feldman (Consultant, SCA; Secretary, IJCIC)
- 10) Dr. Lukasz Hirszowicz (Institute of Jewish Affairs, London)
- 11) Prof. Jean Halperin (Consultant, Interreligious Affairs; WJC, Geneva)
- 12) Maurice Honigbaum (President, European B'nai Brith [Nice])
- 13) Prof. Jacob Katz (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)
- 14) Miroslav Karny (Prague)
- 15) Gunther Lawrence (Dir., Public Information, SCA)
- 16) Mirko Mirkovic (Redactor, Croat P.E.N. Club, Zagreb)
- 17) Rabbi Henry D. Michelman (Executive Vice-President, SCA)
- 18) Rabbi Jordan Pearlson (Canadian Jewish Congress, Toronto)
- 19) Dr. S. J. Roth (Dir. [ret.] Institute of Jewish Affairs, London)
- 20) Seymour Reich (Chairman, IJCIC)
- 21) Dr. G. M. Riegner (Co-Chmn., Gov. Bd., WJC [Geneva])
- 22) Dr. Silber (Hebrew University/accompanying Dr. Katz)
- 23) Rabbi Fabian Schonfeld (Co-Chmn., Interreligious Affairs, SCA)
- 24) Grand Rabbin R.S. Sirat (Paris)
- 25) Rabbi Henry D. Sobel (Latin American Jewish Congress, Sao Paulo)
- 26) Rabbi Norman Soloman (Editor, Christian Jewish Relations, UK)
- 27) Israel Singer (Secretary General, WJC)
- 28) Elan Steinberg (Exec. Dir., WJC)
- 29) Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum (Past Chairman, IJCIC - SCA)
- 30) Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder (Hebrew University, Jerusalem)
- 31) Rabbi Mordecai Waxman (Past Chairman, IJCIC - SCA)
- 32) Rabbi Walter Wurzburger (Past President, SCA)
- 33) Rabbi Marc Winer (Interreligious Affairs Committee, SCA)
- 34) Rabbi Joel Zaiman (President, SCA)
- 35) Tullia Zevi (Pres., Union of Jewish Communities of Italy)

In honor of the International Jewish Committee on
Interreligious Consultations



The Ambassador
of the United States of America
to the Holy See
Thomas P. Melady and Mrs. Melady
request the honor of the company of
Rabbi Mark H. Tanenbaum
for a Reception
on Tuesday, December 4, 1990
at 6:30 — 8:00 p.m.

R.S.V.P.
639-0558 P.M.

G. Medici II
Via ~~St. Andrea~~ ~~60153~~
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Sir Sigmund Sternberg O.St.J. KCSG JP

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Facsimile 071-485 4512

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
45 East 89th Street (18F)
New York
NY 10128 USA

Date 10 December 1990

Our ref sss/sg

Your ref



Dear Marc

I am sending you an article from La Monde.

I had a meeting with Sam Toledano and I am also in touch with Maurice Hatchwell Toledano.

What I propose to do is to have a petition signed by leading Catholics, Jews and Moslems to be presented to the newly appointed foreign minster at the Vatican.

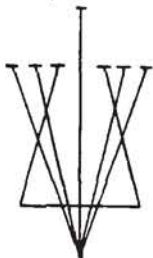
Could you find out whether Cardinal Connor would be willing to sign such a petition.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely

S. Gamba

SIR SIGMUND STERNBERG



- Replied yes - 12/26/90
- send photo 12/18/91

JEWISH FEDERATION OF TULSA • 2021 E. 71st STREET • TULSA, OK 74136 • (918) 495-1100

December 12, 1990

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum
45 E. 89th, #18F
New York, NY 10128

Dear Marc,

Thank you for agreeing to be the lecturer at the 1992 Dr. Clarence Knippa Annual Interfaith/Ecumenical Lecture Series.

Past lecturers have been:

1988 Dr. Donald Shriver
1989 Dr. Paul Van Buren
1990 Dr. James Sanders

Attached is the stated purpose of the annual lecture. You will be our first Jewish lecturer on Sunday, February 2, 1992, 7:00 p.m., at the Grace Lutheran Church. We will be responsible for your \$2,000 honorarium and expenses.

We are all looking forward to hearing and learning from you. I will be in touch on the details as the date approaches.

Fondly,

Yolanda Charney

* Marc - had to change the date because 1/26 is the Super Bowl. Please call if this is not O.K.



COVENANT HOUSE

346 WEST 17TH STREET NEW YORK, N.Y. 10011-5002
(212) 727-4000 Fax: (212) 989-7586

December 12, 1990

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
45 E. 89th Street
New York, NY 10029

Dear Marc,

Please accept my warm thanks for your agreement to join the Covenant House board. Your commitment to our mission and the renewal of our organization is very encouraging.

As we look forward to 1991, the board will be focusing on the change in leadership under our new President, Sister Mary Rose McGeady. Her arrival has marked a new beginning for the agency and everyone has welcomed her warmth, talent, and positive outlook for our future. As a first priority, the board will be doing everything it can to rebuild our donor confidence and support.

You will be pleased to know that you will be joining a board that includes eleven new members who have joined us since April. I am sure you will find the board to be both talented and dedicated and a wonderful group of people with whom to work.

Marc, we look forward to having you join us next year. Your wisdom and counsel will be invaluable to us.

Sincerely,

Ralph A. Pfeiffer, Jr.

*Received 12/24/90
Holding card 10/1/91*

Received 9/16/90

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 DAVID BOIES
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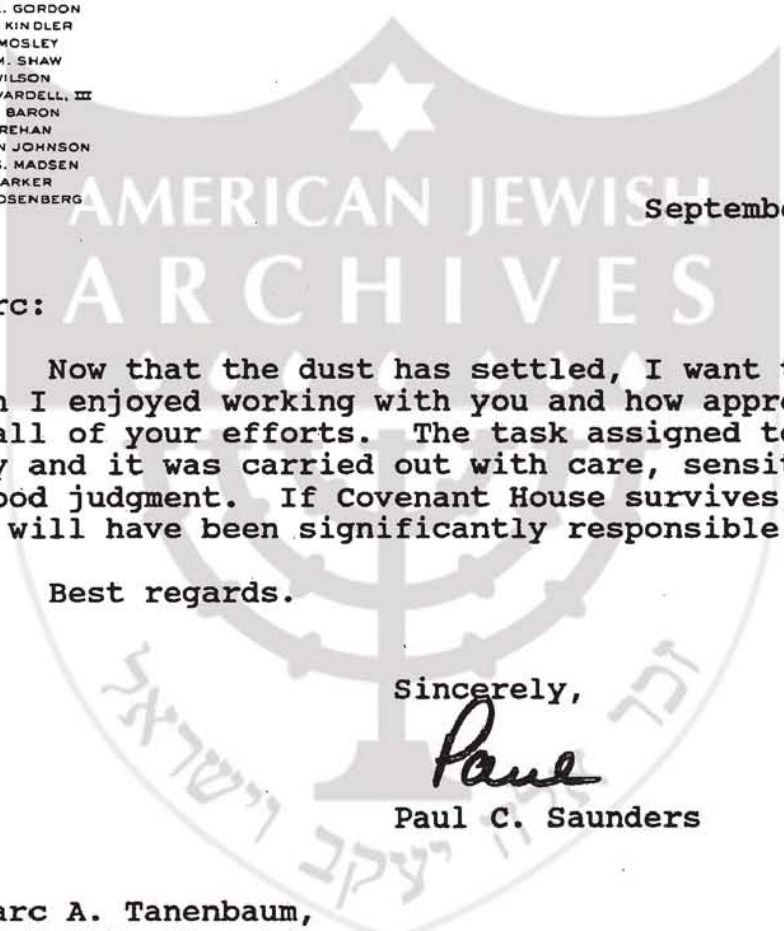
WORLDWIDE PLAZA
 825 EIGHTH AVENUE
 NEW YORK, N. Y. 10019

TELEPHONE: (212) 474-1000
 FACSIMILE: (212) 474-3700

WRITER'S DIRECT DIAL NUMBER

(212) 474-1404

33 KING WILLIAM STREET
 LONDON EC4R 9DU ENGLAND
 TELEPHONE: 071-606-1421
 FACSIMILE: 071-860-1150



September 14, 1990

Dear Marc:

Now that the dust has settled, I want to say again how much I enjoyed working with you and how appreciative we are of all of your efforts. The task assigned to you was not easy and it was carried out with care, sensitivity and great good judgment. If Covenant House survives, your efforts will have been significantly responsible.

Best regards.

Sincerely,

Paul

Paul C. Saunders

Rabbi Marc A. Tanenbaum,
 45 East 89th Street,
 New York, N. Y. 10128.

RR

Marc H. Tanenbaum
45 East 89th St. (18 F)
New York, New York 10128

December 16, 1990

My Dear Barbara and David,

I am deeply shocked
and heartsick to learn of the
sudden death of Morton.

From the days of working
with Jacob and Cardinal Shehan of
Baltimore, I feel a deep and
personal kinship with the
Blaustein family, embodied in
more recent years through
Morton and your good selves.

Your contributions
to making Jewish life more
alive and meaningful, and
to improving the human condition
anywhere - which Morton
carried forward in his dedicated

life - assures your family's
immortality forever.

I will always remember
Norton's warmth and friendship
in our interchanges, and I
pray he will have the peace
he so fully deserves.

Please convey the
condolences of my wife, Gergette,
and myself to all the
members of your great family.

Sincerely, as ever,

Isaac



Selma G. Hirsh

Jan 2 - 91

Dear Marc

Many thanks for your
note & enclosures.

The letters you wrote
were perfect - of course.

Let's get together

soon -

Love

Selma

December 21, 1990

For Morton

The Blaustein family and the American Jewish Committee have been inextricably linked for more than 40 years. I like to think -- I know -- that each has been greatly enriched by the other.

But today we are all diminished. Richard Maass, Ted Ellenoff, our honorary presidents, Bert Gold our Executive Vice President emeritus -- all of us who are here today and the very many more who wanted to be but were unable to -- all of us feel a profound sense of loss and an overwhelming sadness.

My own association with the family and with Morton goes back to 1949 when as a young AJC staff member I was assigned to work with our then newly elected President, Jacob Blaustein -- a daunting assignment. I was meeting with Jacob in Baltimore one day and Morton stuck his head in the door of the conference room. He couldn't have been more than 21 or 22. Jacob introduced us and I was immediately charmed by his boyish enthusiasm, his ebullience and his whole joyful demeanor. It was in such sharp contrast to his sober business-like parent! At that moment Jacob was called out to the telephone and I confessed to Morton that I was in awe of his father. He laughed and said, "you wanna know something -- so am I! But don't worry, he's really a great guy -- you'll even get to like him!" Morton was right on both counts.

Soon thereafter Morton and Nancy married and went off to California and Texas for what both have often described to me as nothing short of ^{an} idyllic ^{days} their happiness so greatly enhanced by the arrivals first of Susan^a and a few years later, Jeannie. During that period I saw Morton only infrequently, at occasional AJC events. Our encounters were always warm and pleasant, but it was not until the early or mid-sixties, when Morton and Nancy returned to Baltimore, did our friendship really take off.

Nancy commented to me yesterday that our association had really spanned all the important periods in Morton's adult life. And I guess it did. Morton ~~and~~ became active in the Committee in the sixties and early seventies and he and I accomplished a good deal. We thoroughly enjoyed our association -- there were many long luncheons, occasional dinners and endless, endless phone calls. They were the happy times.

But I also shared with him some of the darker hours -- and there were too many of them. Thinking about that time over the last few days I could not help wondering if we knew then what we know now about the devastating effects of certain medications, whether he might not have been spared some if not all of those hours.

But mostly over the last few days I have been thinking of the real Morton, the healthy Morton -- and his special qualities of mind and character.

I thought -- not for the first time -- that Morton had inherited the best qualities of both his parents. Jacob's fine, penetrating intelligence and Hilda's warmth and welcoming graciousness. Jacob's strong commitment to family and community -- and Hilda's great humanity. And of course Hilda's humor, her wit. Morton had that -- sometimes mischievous -- but never unkind, never unkind.

Morton truly understood his legacy and accepted it wholeheartedly. He really saw himself as a crucial link in the long chain of life that stretched from his grandparents to his parents, down to him and his children and to his sisters and their children. He took every bit as seriously as did Jacob, his obligations and commitment to family and community, to his fellow Jews and to all less fortunate than he.

You have heard of the extensive philanthropies of the family. I remember particularly two occasions when the Committee was the beneficiary of that philanthropy. In 1971 Morton, on behalf of the family, announced an endowment gift in memory of their father, enabling us to establish the Jacob Blaustein Institute for the Advancement of Human Rights. And a few years later, also on behalf of the family, he announced another endowment grant in honor of their mother's 85th birthday, enabling us to create the Hilda Katz Blaustein Young Leadership Training Institute. What I remember most about those occasions was not the generosity of the gifts -- and they were generous -- but the very gracious way they were offered. On each occasion Morton thanked the Committee for "the privilege of service" -- the privilege of service -- those were his exact words. Typically Morton!

For one who relied so heavily on reason -- Morton hated unreasonableness -- he could be wonderfully sentimental, especially about those near and dear to him. With what joy and pride he would regularly report to me in the greatest detail -- Jane's latest accomplishments, what it was that Susan and Jeannie, Alan and Peter, were doing at the moment. And, not infrequently, and with equal relish what his

various nieces and nephews were up to -- for he had such obvious and genuine affection for all of them.

Just a few weeks ago -- in the afterglow of Jeannie's wedding and during one of our protracted telephone calls, I asked him how things were going. That was never a casual question, mine to him, and Morton never treated it as such. He always told me precisely how things were. This time he said, "Things are great, Jane is great, our life is great, the kids are great, our new house is great, the house in Maine is great." "Great", I answered, "what else is new?" Quick came the response: "Listen Selma," he said, "do you realize" his voice moving into the upper register as it was wont to do, "do you realize lots of fellows out there spend a lifetime looking for one woman to love and I've had two wonderful wives in my lifetime!"

It struck me then, but more so in recent days, how far he had come from the darkness that had once enveloped him! Morton was at last able to treasure the good years of the past even as he lived so happily in the present with his Jane, planning ever so happily for an even more wonderful future together with her.

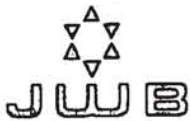
Over the last years with Jane he seemed to have found new strengths and to have recaptured the old ones. He had acquired the peace and serenity that had so long eluded him -- and the ability to invest himself once again in matters of importance to him -- in business, public affairs and the family -- always the family.

He had recaptured his infinite capacity for joy, for fun -- his lovely boyish enthusiasm for things great and small -- and what a gift that was, especially to his children and especially to Jeannie.

Morton died too soon. His life's agenda was nowhere near complete.

Students of death and dying suggest that if there is ever such a thing as a good death, it is a sudden one -- one that strikes without warning. I don't know about that. For Morton's sake I hope it is so. For then it will only be those of us who are left behind who must endure the pain.

I will never forget Morton.



JWB LECTURE BUREAU

15 East 26th Street, New York, N. Y. 10010

Telephone: (212) 532-4949

2851

LECTURER'S BOOKING REMINDER AND REPORT

TO RABBI MARC TANENBAUM DATE DEC 24 90

TO APPEAR ON Wednesday JAN 9 91 HOUR OF APPEARANCE 8:00 PM

AUSPICES SOUTH HUNTINGTON JEWISH CENTER AGE RANGE OF AUDIENCE

PERSON IN CHARGE Rabbi Earl Kideckel (Bus. Phone) (516) 421-32
(Home Phone)

INVOICE TO BE SENT TO Rabbi Earl Kideckel

PLACE OF MEETING SOUTH HUNTINGTON JEWISH CENTER ESTIMATED SIZE OF AUDIENCE

ADDRESS 2600 New York Avenue

CITY Melville STATE NY
ZIP CODE 11747

NATURE OF MEETING PROGRAM SHARED WITH

SUBJECT OR PROGRAM LENGTH OF PRESENTATION REQUESTED

FEE & TERMS \$ 2,000 + \$20 travel expenses



Hotel Reservations at _____ Double _____ Single _____

TRANSPORTATION TO MEETING _____ TRANSPORTATION FROM MEETING _____

Leave _____ Leave _____
Arrive _____ Arrive _____

AIR TRAVEL FOR TRIPS OF MORE THAN 200 MILES, SANCTIONED BY BUREAU UNLESS SPECIFICALLY PROHIBITED BY SPONSORING ORGANIZATION.

Other Remarks

LECTURER/ARTIST—PLEASE ADVISE SPONSOR OF YOUR TRAVEL PLANS IMMEDIATELY UPON RECEIPT OF THIS INVOICE.

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, 45 East 89 St-#18F, NY 10128
(h)(212)831-2952

PLEASE FILL OUT THE FOLLOWING REPORT AND RETURN THIS MEMORANDUM TO THE BUREAU.

Number present at meeting _____

Evaluation of Community Reaction _____

Recommendations for improvement of arrangements _____

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ELEMENTS OF A STATEMENT FOR JEWS CALLING MEETING IN PRAGUE

1990

1. Acknowledge role of Nostre Aetate and subsequent efforts as representing improvement of knowledge and relationships.
2. Awareness of anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe which flourished in the atmosphere of political situations which prevailed and which have now changed. We hope that this opens prospects of new perception.
3. Condemnation of anti-Semitism.
4. How to rectify it.
 - a. Widen circulation of doctrine in Nostre Aetate and of our meetings of the last twenty years.
 - b. Systematic efforts to uprooting sources of religious anti-Semitism by:
 1. Texts
 2. Priestly training
 3. Liturgy
 4. Use of Catholic mass media
 5. Where appropriate - Institutes & Seminars & Conferences
5. This meeting has discussed religious basis of anti-Semitism over past 1900 years and its relationship to Holocaust. It has led to a recognition that Catholic thought, teaching, preaching and practice have been major contributors to the creation of anti-Semitism in Western society.
6. Importance of recognizing this as a basis for a major

Catholic doctrinal statement condemning anti-Semitism- as a sin against the Church and Christianity. Such a statement would be a fulfillment of the commitment made by the Catholic authorities in previous meetings.

7. The Witness section of the Conference provided powerful testimony to the fact that the Church and its adherents failed themselves and other Christians, as well as Jews and other victims by too weak a response to Nazi and other ideologies.
8. Reaffirm that no theological objections to Israel: Recognize centrality of renascent Israel to Jewish life today and to Jewish thought and experience; recognize need for a safe and secure Israel within the context of the turbulence of the Middle East. Support advancement of peace process and feel that establishing full diplomatic relations between Vatican and Israel would make a significant contribution to that process.

9. QUESTION OF IMPLEMENTATION OF SIX POINTS OF 1985

CONCLUSION

In the light of the grave threat to human life and welfare posed by aggressive actions in the Middle East and the use of chemical weapons, need to reassert jointly the importance of civilized principle to which both our faiths are committed and which derive from our sacred heritage.

Living in a period of major transition as divisions of the past disappear in Eastern Europe, we have a major opportunity to reassert the vitality and significance of the religious traditions and to do so in the name of both faiths.

Polish-Jewish relations in the new Poland
25 years after "Nostra Aetate"
Challenge and perspectives

I came here invited by Archbishop Keeler who proposed me in his letter to address the theme of the martyrdom of Poland and the Shoah in a way which could help your people in an interfaith audience to understand the complexities and the challenges of recalling the painful days of the Second World War. He asked me in the same time to speak about the implementation of the Declaration "Nostra Aetate" from the perspective of Central and Eastern Europe. I feel very much honored by this invitation and with joy and pleasure I take up this subject, but first of all I would like to express heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Keeler whose hospitality and cordial generosity made my journey to the United States possible and allows me to meet you today.

1. The abiding interest of the Declaration "Nostra Aetate" and the new Poland.

Last year speaking to the delegates of the American Jewish Committee the Pope said: "In the new and positive atmosphere which has developed since the Council among the Catholics, it is the task of every local church to promote cooperation between Christians and Jews". He pointed also that this cooperation may "contribute to the process of the peaceful and democratic development" taking place in Poland /Osservatore Romano March 17, 1990, CXXX, 64/1990, page 5/. This process of peaceful and democratic development is popularly called "soft revolution".

This "soft" democratic revolution is presently creating quite a new Poland. Notwithstanding many difficulties which still must be overcome, today we live in an independent and democratic state, for the first time in years sensing our due sovereignty, for the first time having freedom of speech and liberty to tell

As you know we experience at moment deep political social and economical changes

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*... the Christian Church in Poland
is and has been as a part of spiritual class.
1954-1955 with the subsequent Holy See's Documents
are the foundation of the mutual relation between
Christian-Jewish*

openly our mind. This new condition presents a serious challenge for the Polish nation, for its new democratic institutions, its political parties, and for the Church as well.

I propose to concentrate today on the Christian-Jewish relations in this new Poland. Of course, it is only a part of a very vast problem of the Christian-Jewish relations in the whole world. Its foundations, seen in the Catholic Church perspective, are in a sense, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration "Nostra Aetate" with the subsequent official Holy See's documents.

In "Nostra Aetate" the Church defined more precisely its relationship to non-Christian religions, among them, the Jewish religion. As underlined by John Paul II during the celebration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of this Declaration - it "has lost non of its vigour. The strength of the Document and its abiding interest derive from the fact that it speaks to all the peoples and about all peoples from a religious perspective, a perspective which is the deepest and most mysterious of the many dimensions of the human person, the image of the Creator /cf. Gn 1:26/. The universal openness of "Nostra Aetate", however, is anchored in and takes its orientation from a high sense of the absolute singularity of God's choice of a particular people, "His own" people, Israel according to the flesh, already called "God's Church" /Lumen Gention 9; cf. NH 13:1; Nm 20:4; Dt 23:1ff. - Osservatore Romano, December 7, 1990, 282/1990, page 5/.

One should note however that in my country, due to the specific Polish background, the implementation of "Nostra Aetate" and the whole of the Christian-Jewish relations have their own aspect. I shall now attempt to point out the particularities of this background which influence the Christian-Jewish relations along with the expectations and perspectives connected with it.

Poland has a dualistic Jewish heritage: glorious, magnificent and tragic at the same time. Till 1939, Poland had the highest percentage of Jewish population outside of Palestine /almost 10 % of its total population/. The Jews created here their own form of religious expression, rich and unique in culture and language.

All of that which used to be called Ostjudentum was formed on the *Like all other local churches etc. The Catholic Church in Poland sees very strongly the bond between with all events which are taking place in the universal church. Nostra Aetate with subsequent*

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territory of the former Polish Republic.

Poland became for many Jews a second fatherland. The majority of Jews living in the world today are by origin from territories of the former and present-day Polish state. Unfortunately, this very land became in our century the place of the Shoah, unprecedented genocide of the Jewish nation. This genocide was followed by the double exodus of Jews from Poland, in 1956 and 1968. Ironically, this former fatherland of over 3.5 millions Jews, has now become a country virtually without Jews /the Jewish population is estimated about 10 thousands with less than two thousands Jews belonging to the Religious Union of Mosaic Confession in Poland/.

2. The Shoah as Polish and christian problem.

So I stand before you today, a representative of the Church and the nation on whose soil the Shoah was perpetrated. It was not our guilt nor our work. ^{AS A NATION} We were ourselves victims of the Nazis. As a matter of fact, we were their first victims.

But the Shoah has broken into our history and has made an awesome impact upon it. ^{AS ELIE WIESEL STATED IN HIS BOOKS} Thus it became an inseparable component of our national consciousness not only for Polish Jews but also for Polish Christians and the entire Polish nation.

I do not propose to present a fully developed and speculative address, nor to engage in polemics with anyone nor to argue anyone's personal point of view. I simply want to give testimony of this consciousness in the name of my nation and my Church. Nor do I propose to repeat once more the well known history of the last war, the tragic story of the SHOAH and so many extermination camps.

I would not presume to speak of the significance of the SHOAH to Jews. I do not feel entitled to do so. But I do desire to attest to the truth of Ellie Wiesel's words, "The memory of genocide has become a part of social consciousness in Poland".

Neither do I dare question the uniqueness of Jewish suffering; it was atrocious and inconceivably so. We in Poland are daily

striving to understand the enormous dimension of the SHOAH. But so often an impression is cast upon us that people outside Poland do not comprehend the total tragedy of the Polish martyrdom under Nazi occupation.

Yet, "~~what threatened you was an identical threat to us~~", as was declared by the Pope in Warsaw on June 14, 1987, at his meeting with the Religious Union of Mosaic Confession. "We were under the same threat even if perhaps it was not carried out to the same extent when time ran out on them".

But the same diabolical, pagan and racial Nazi ideology which perpetrated the SHOAH threatened the very existence of the Polish nation even if not in identical dimension.

In Poland today it is not easy to find a family untouched by Nazi terror, or one whose members were not killed nor martyred in one of the infamous labour or concentration camps or prisons. In my native diocese 50 % of the clergy were killed during the war, the entire faculty of seminary professors killed in its earliest days on October 20, 1939. The diocese under my administration today lost 52 % of its priests then.

Speaking about it today I do not wish to minimize the sufferings of the Jewish people in any way, but to bear witness to the fact that, if Jews and Gypsies were annihilated simply because they were born Jews and Gypsies, many Poles were killed also as Poles because they were Poles and resolved to remain Poles through it all. Not a few of them died for rescuing and sheltering Jews.

This is another, and too often forgotten, face of the SHOAH.

Konstanty Gebert, a newsman and one of the few Jews still living in Poland, declares that it is in Poland alone where the difference between the Shoah and the Polish martyrdom in Auschwitz is not clearly evident "because those people were dying the same death, murdered by the same ideology and were not dying as enemies of the Nazis, but as Jews and as Poles".

3. The community of suffering.

Another Polish Jew, Stanisław Krajewski, speaks about a "specific character" of Christian-Jewish dialogue in Poland. He observes how outside Poland the SHOAH is usually viewed against a background of Christian-Jewish relations. He makes the following observation:

"however, it is extremely difficult (to comprehend this) because in general it seems more appropriate here to speak about Polish-Jewish and Polish-German relations. As a matter of fact, when Polish Catholics reflect upon the World War II, they see rather the community of suffering with Jews than the community of Christendom with Germans. Thus, the extermination of Polish Jews is usually seen in Poland as a part of the suffering of the Polish nation, and in this way the specific character of the Jewish doom is easily obscured"

/Stanisław Krajewski, Dialog chrześcijańsko-żydowski w Polsce: Problemy i ich tło, Spojrzenia żydowskie, tekst wystąpienia na sympozjum teologicznym w ATK, Warszawa, 3 kwietnia 1990 (maszynopis)/.

A community of suffering very often means, and should mean, a community of prayer. The French take justifiable pride in the story of Rabbi Bloch, who during World War I went with a cross to a dying Christian soldier, and was killed with him. But, if a French Rabbi took the place of a priest to help a suffering brother, we in Poland also know of a Catholic priest, who in a similar situation became a Rabbi. Under the Nazi occupation the priest in question - whom I know personally - found himself in the Majdanek extermination camp with false identification papers. Discovering that he was the only priest in that horrible place, he did not disclose his identity to the Nazis, but chose to comfort all the dying. He went to Jews with the words of the psalm: "Out of the depths I have called to Thee, O Lord..." /Ps 130,1/. And one of the Jews said to him at his last gasp: "Thank you, Rabbi, that you are here with me!".

But the suffering there was too atrocious, too incredible. At times it obscured everything else and everyone else. And today,

fifty years later, it still seems now and again capable of dividing rather than uniting us. From the Jewish side it was justly observed by Judith Hershcopf Banki that "Mutual victimization does not necessarily guarantee mutual sympathy, as Jews and Polish Catholics discovered in their own conflict over the Auschwitz convent" /"The Auschwitz Convent Controversy, historic memories in conflict", AJC, New York 1990, page 6/.

4. The Carmelite convent controversy and the contributions of Polish Episcopal Commission for Dialogue with the Judaism

The bitter controversy caused by the presence of the Carmelite Convent in Auschwitz seemed in a certain moment to endanger seriously the continuity of the Christian-Jewish dialogue. Our Episcopal Commission for Dialogue with Judaism made its presence felt at all stages of this controversy, and, we hope, has contributed essentially to a better mutual understanding between Jews and Christians.

Let me point to most important contributions of our Commission. First, Father Stanisław Musiał, the Commission's secretary, published a comprehensive article in the "Pismo Okólne", /the circular letter which serves as the official organ of the Polish Bishops' Conference/, and attempted to explain to Polish readers what Auschwitz signifies to Jews. Since there are few Jews in today's Poland, our Commission has seen it as its special duty to interpret the Jewish point of view to the Polish people. Stanisław Krajewski in the paper cited previously, called Father Musiał's article "the most important Polish declaration on this subject". Later, the Commission issued three communiques, one each on April 23, July 18 and September 6.

As a response to the violent action of Rabbi Weiss and the well-known communique of Cardinal Macharski announcing the suspension of building the Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer at Auschwitz, our Commission in its own communique repeated the statement of Polish-Jewish organizations which said, "Favorable conditions have been created for the

implementation of the 1987 Geneva agreement". Personally, I regret very much that this joint Jewish-Christian declaration failed to elicit much interest on either side. On the contrary, it encountered serious objections from both sides.

A most important statement about the Auschwitz controversy is found in our communiqué of September 6, 1989, in which among other things we said:

"The conflict over the question of the Convent at Auschwitz could cause an almost total rupture of the dialogue between Christians and Jews over the world. It seems that Jewish-Christian dialogue cannot continue unless this conflict is resolved... The exceptional significance of Auschwitz as a memorial site of the death of millions of innocent victims makes it absolutely obligatory to employ every possible mean to resolve the tensions and misunderstandings which have arisen".

This all-important and true purpose must not be obscured by many difficult and painful though transitory problems. Emotions should not prevail over reason. Let us not forget what is truly at stake. As followers of two great religions, joined by God in an eternal plan of salvation, were we now to break off dialogue and mutual contact, we could no longer consider ourselves as God's witnesses. For both, as Christians and as Jews, we shall be called by God to account for our actions.

The Polish Bishops' Conference has also issued two separate statements dated on March 9, 1989 (the 233 th plenary session) and on October 7, 1989 (the 237 th plenary session), both explicitly promoting the idea of building the Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer at Auschwitz.

5. The Auschwitz Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer

The breakthrough regarding the Carmelite Convent controversy came from the Vatican Commission for the Religious Relations with Judaism on September 19, 1989. However let me note that thist

statement signed by Card. Willebrands resumes and holds up very clearly the Communique of our Commission stating:

"The Holy See Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism has noted with satisfaction the communique published Sept. 1, 1989, by Bishop Henryk Muszyński, President of the Polish Bishop's Commission for Dialogue with Judaism. The intention to establish a Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer, as the Geneva Declaration of February 1987 provides, is welcomed positively since the Holy See is convinced that such a Center would contribute significantly to the development of good relations between Christians and Jews (...). In order to support the implementation of this important but costly project, the Holy See is prepared to make its own financial contribution".

The Pope, in his address to the Jewish community of Vienna on June 24, 1988, expressed the hope that

"this Center will produce results and will serve as a model for other nations. The prayerful and dedicated life of the Carmelites, whose convent will be in some way at the heart of the Center, will contribute decisively to its success".

Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, then the president of the Vatican Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews, in his article published in Osservatore Romano, (September 30, 1989) stressed the importance of our Commission's statement. He wrote there:

"Msgr. Henryk Muszyński, President of the Polish Episcopal Commission for the Dialogue with Judaism, made authoritative interventions on several occasions and more recently with great firmness, to reiterate that the principal object of the Geneva Declaration was the expressed intention to proceed to the setting up of a Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer. Its primary purpose is that of promoting reflection on the Shoah and also on the martyrdom of the Polish people and other European peoples in the years 1939-1945".

In spring 1990 a Committee for promoting the Center of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer was founded in Krakow. It is a joint civil and Catholic Committee: Cardinal Macharski

has appointed Marek Głownia as its Director; Stefan Wilkanowicz is responsible for the project on behalf of the Polish Government.

There was created also an International Program Council whose members are chosen among the most eminent personalities from the Catholic as well as from the Jewish side.

The constructing activities began in February 1990. The Center should be inaugurated in May/June of the current year with the opening of its first building and the first meeting of young journalists from many different countries. *Founded by Mrs. J. Głownia*
Director: Marek Głownia

There is also another civil Committee funded in order to reorganize the Auschwitz Museum in a more appropriate way reflecting the grim history of that place, the role the Jews played in it, and its meaning for the Jewish people as well. Until now it has been a museum of anti-Nazi, communist and atheistic propaganda rather than a museum of the true Auschwitz history. And this bias must be redressed. In May 1990 the Committee members met at Yarnton Manor in Oxford with a group of Jewish intellectuals and established the main principles which are to guide the reorganization of the museum.

6. Pastoral Letter on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Second Vatican Council's Declaration "Nostra Aetate"

For a fairly long time our Commission has been working on an official document ^{unanimously} of Polish Catholic Church on Christian-Jewish relations. Accepted by the 244th ^{guided by Cardinal Głownia} Plenary Conference of Polish Episcopate in Częstochowa, on November 20, 1990, it was read in all churches and chapels in our country at Mass on Sunday, January 20, 1991. I would like to point here explicitly that it is a letter not - as sometimes wrongly termed - "on anti-Semitism", but on Christian-Jewish relations as seen from the Polish perspective.

Stanisław Krajewski greeted its publication with satisfaction noting: "Pity that it is so late, what a mercy that it is so good!" /Gazeta Wyborcza January 26/27, 1991/. And I am often

asked why the preparation of this text was taken up in Poland much later than in other European countries. The truth is that there are several reasons:

a/ It is only recently that we recovered in Poland freedom of speech. Till the last years there were some subjects taboo, as for instance the Kielce pogrom of 1946.

b/ In Poland the Shoah is not a subject that can be discussed from the outside, but - as the Pope said - it remains until today "an open wound always bleeding".

c/ The Polish Catholic church was obliged to struggle for its survival and all other questions had to recede into the background. As it was correctly pointed out by the same Stanisław Krajewski, in Poland, the Catholic Church represented in the after-war period "not only religion but also resistance against communist totalitarianism which tried to eliminate religion from public life" /SIDIC Review XXII 3, 1989/. *not decided by the... 1979*

Yes, it is true, our Pastoral Letter came late, but not to late as I do believe. Let me tell you a small Jewish story. As you know, the Jewish New Year, Rosh-la-Shana, begins with the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar, the month of Tishrei. It is strange to begin a new year in the middle of the year. According to some Jewish commentators, it is not strange at all. Rather, an important teaching is incorporated in this practice. That teaching is that one can make new beginnings any time. Polish-Jewish and Catholic-Jewish relations have existed for many centuries. Yet each meeting and each day is an opportunity for a new beginning.

The new Pastoral Letter may be justly compared to the well-known Letter of Polish Bishops on the reconciliation with the Germans. But then the situation was much better defined: there was a clear division between oppressors and victims, while here we have only victims knowing their own sufferings but unaware of the sufferings on the other side; there was an evident necessity of forgiveness, here - as there are few Jews in Poland - the majority don't see the problem at all.

In presenting the new Pastoral Letter of the Polish Episcopate

allow me to avail myself of the masterful analysis of this document published by Rabbi A. James Rudnin, National Inter-religious Director of the American Jewish Committee. He states:

"The Letter represents the unanimous position of the entire Episcopate of Poland, including the Primate, Joseph Cardinal Glemp. I believe the Letter is a significant breakthrough in Catholic-Jewish relations... Like many other important documents in Catholic-Jewish relations, this Pastoral Letter will be cited in coming years as a vital 'building block' in developing mutual respect, understanding and esteem between Catholics and Jews, The Pastoral Letter is part of the on-going implementation of the principles and teaching of the 'Nostra Aetate' Declaration".

The first part of the Letter is theological, beginning with a strong Papal affirmation of "Nostra Aetate" as a fundamental and irrevocable teaching of the Catholic Church.

The Letter reminds all Catholics that "the Church is rooted in the Jewish people" and that "there is no other religion with which it has such close relations". In the same time the Polish Bishops reaffirm the Second Vatican Council's repudiation of the "accusation that all the Jews bear responsibility for the death of Christ" and they quote language of the Council of Trent to assert that "Christian sinners are more responsible... in comparison with certain Jews who participated in it" /in the condemnation of Jesus/.

The second part of the Pastoral Letter is devoted to Polish-Christian relations. After recognizing the rich history of Jewish life in Poland it states that during the last war "this particular land became the grave for several million Jews". That was done by the nazi, not by the Polish people. Many Poles risked their life and life of their families, many died to save the Jews. The Bishops quote here the words of John Paul II spoken on September 26, 1990, on common Polish-Jewish history:

"There is still one other nation, one particular people; the people of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and the Prophets, the inheritors of the faith of Abraham... This people lived side by side with us for generations, on the same land... This people underwent the terrible death of millions of their sons and daughters. At first they were stigmatized in a

particular way. Later, they were pushed into the ghetto in separate neighbourhoods. Then they were taken to the gas-chambers, they underwent death - only because they were children of this people. Murderers did this on our land - perhaps in order to dishonor it. One cannot dishonor a land by the death of innocent victims. Through such death a land becomes a sacred relic"

/Pastoral Letter/.

Yes, there were also some Poles who remained indifferent to the Jewish tragedy. There were even some who "in some way were the cause of the death of Jews... If only one Christian could have helped and did not stretch out his helping hand to a Jew... or caused his death, we must ask for forgiveness of our Jewish brothers and sisters". But the Bishops point out also that many Poles "still remember the injustices and injuries committed by the post-war Communist authorities, in which people of Jewish origin also took part. They assert however that neither Jewish origin nor the Jewish religion was the "source" of Communist ideology or practice, "from which the Jews themselves, in fact, suffered many injustice".

One may quote here as a kind of commentary the words spoken by Simon Wiesenthal in an interview given on his 80th birthday:

"Then the war came. It is at times like these that the lower elements in society surface - the szmalcownicy /blackmailers/, who would betray Jews for a bottle of vodka or a pair of shoes

This was one aspect. On the other hand the 30 or 40.000 Jews who survived, survived thanks to help from Poles. This I know. But on the other hand whenever I am talking on this subject I always say that I know kind of role Jewish Communists played in Poland after the war. And just as I, as a Jew, do not want to shoulder responsibility for the Jewish communists, I cannot blame 36 milion Poles for those thousands of szmalcownicy" /Interview with Simon Wiesenthal, Radio Free Europe, Munich, 7 January 1989/.

At the end the Pastoral Letter calls for "the elimination of distrust, prejudices and stereotypes" inviting in the same time "to mutual acquaintance and understanding based on respect for our separates religious traditions".

Rabbi Rudin concludes his analysis by saying:

"To read the Pastoral Letter is like taking a crash course in both Jewish history and Catholic-Jewish relations because the Letter painfully reflects the, incomprehensible' tragedy of the past as well as the, common hope' for a new and positive relationship between Polish Catholics and Jews. The fact that this Letter is intended as a permanent teaching document for Polish Catholics makes it unique and potentially great historical importance".

7. The so-called Polish anti-Semitism

One of the problems treated in the Pastoral Letter is that of the anti-Semitism.

"We express, declare the Bishops, our sincere regret for all the incidents of anti-Semitism which were committed at any time or by any one on Polish soil. We do this with the deep conviction that all incidents of anti-Semitism are contrary to the spirit of the Gospel...

In expressing our sorrow... we cannot refrain from mentioning how we regard as unjust and deeply harmful the use by many of a concept of so-called Polish anti-Semitism which joins again and again the issue of concentration camps not with their factual perpetrators, but with Poles in a Poland under German occupation".

One should add that in the post-war Poland it was the Communist Party that created, for its own purposes, a new kind of "instrumental" anti-Semitism. The Polish-Jewish controversies and antagonisms did not originate, as in the past, from economic or religious grounds, but since 1945 they have been almost exclusively of a political nature. We had three big political crises in the years 1956, 1968 and 1980/81, and all of them, in one or other way, were linked to the Jews still living in Poland. In all of these crises, however, the real issue was not the "Jewish question", but the future and sometimes even the very existence of the ruling Communist Party.

If we should say that this artificially created anti-Semitism was a communist anti-Semitism, it is true also that the last year we have witnessed the birth of its new, also instrumental, form, which we may call "postcommunist". It was used widely during our

presidential elections, when some circles accused Wałęsa of anti-Semitism and others denounced Mazowiecki as a Jew, both allegations being equally false.

The most difficult thing is to evaluate the real proportions of anti-Semitic incidents. One is certain, you can not blame the whole nation for actions of singular people or groups, who are trying to reach their own political purposes. Comments of Polish anti-Semitism like:

"Poles imbibe anti-Semitism with their mothers milk", we feel as very harmful, irresponsible, unjust and untrue. "Speaking of an unprecedented extermination of Jews, we can not forget, even more so, remain silent, over the fact that Poles as a nation were among the first victims of the same criminal racist ideology of Hitler's nazism" /Pastoral Letter/.

The first and terrible instance of the communist manipulation was the Kielce Pogrom of 1946, was provoked by the Stalinist agents in order to prove to the Western Europe that the Poles were either "good communists" or "morderous anti-Semites". Of course, this tragic event is not justified nor sufficiently explained by the fact of the evident political provocation. But as the Polish Catholic Church and, personally, its then Primate, Cardinal August Hlond, were sometimes blamed for their alleged silence on this subject, I feel myself obligated to quote from the Cardinal's declaration addressed one week after the event to American journalists in Warsaw:

"The Catholic Church condemns all murders, always and everywhere, no matter by whom perpetrated and no matter who are the victims, Poles or Jews, no matter where, in Kielce or in other parts of Poland".

And it may be well to add that as early as 1936 Cardinal Hlond already warned his compatriots against the antisemitism "imported from abroad" which he described as an attitude "incompatible with the Catholic ethics" /August Hlond, Prymas Polski, Z prymasowskiej stolicy, Listy pasterskie, Poznań 1936, p. 192-193/. Fifty years before Vatican II!...

8. The implementation of "Nostra Aetate" in Poland - after the Pastoral Letter

No doubt our Commission still has much work to do in Poland for the full implementation of "Nostra Aetate". We have begun by publishing in one volume the Polish translation of all the Vatican documents concerning Jews and Christian-Jewish relations /Żydzi i judaizm w dokumentach Kościoła i nauczaniu Jana Pawła II 1965-1989, Warszawa 1990/. One should stress the fact that in Poland all Papal pronouncements have an exceptional authority and that's why we have decided to begin with them. All - or practically all - of these documents were published earlier in Polish, but we thought it useful to collect them in one volume under the auspices of our Commission. This book opens a new series edited by Academy of Catholic Theology under the heading: The Church and the Jews and Judaism /Kościół a Żydzi i judaizm/. The next to appear will be the volume "The children of the one God" containing the papers of the members of the seminary 1989 in the Spertus College of Judaica of Chicago, then the papers of the Symposium of Tyniec /1988/ and the Polish translation of "Fifteen Years of Christian-Jewish Dialogue".

Perhaps the most important work of our Commission is appropriate and objective information and education. We have organized already three Symposia in Poland /the first one in 1988 in the Abbey of Tyniec, the following two in the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw, in 1989 and 1990/ with the participation of Christians and Jews from Poland and from abroad as well. The fourth will take place in Kraków, April 7-10 of the current year, on the subject: The Shoah. Implications for Jewish and Christian theological thinking.

The Polish Episcopate Commission was also represented in September 1990 at the meeting at Prague, where the Jewish-Catholic International Liaison Committee considered at length the religious and historical dimensions of the Shoah and of anti-Semitism. The Archbishop Edward I. Cassidy, President of the

Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews called on this occasion for TESHUVAH - repentance on the part of Catholics for all acts of anti-Semitism.

9. What have we learned from the Auschwitz convent controversy

I don't need to rehearse here the affair of the Auschwitz Convent. I shall only ask, what have we learned from the experience? First of all, we have learned that the Jewish sensibility is quite different from our own and that we must respect it even when we don't understand it fully. For Polish people the difference between the Shoah and the Polish martyrdom in Auschwitz is not so evident or as clear as it is elsewhere /see K. Gebert's words quoted above/.

One of the greatest difficulties encountered by our Commission in its work is the fact that there are so few Jews in today's Poland. That's why many Poles are of opinion that there is no "Jewish problem" in our country. From this point of view the Auschwitz convent controversy may even be seen as beneficial because it is arousing an interest in Jews and Judaism and at the same time showing the full complexity of these problems.

The establishment of this convent, despite so many later accusations, had nothing to do with the denounced Polish "anti-Semitism". It was seen as purely religious sign as well as an opposition and a protest against the banalization of that terrible place. And today many Polish people cannot understand such accusations and have difficulty believing in their sincerity.

It seems wrong that the victims of the same racial ideology /even if they have not suffered in quite the same way/ should now contend with each other, accusing and slandering each other. While Jews stress the unique nature of the Shoah, Poles see in such enunciations a desire to minimize their own sufferings. And while Poles speak about their own martyrs, Jews, in a like manner, accuse them of a conscious effort to minimize or even to appropriate Jewish sufferings.

The difference in the religious sensibility of Jews and Christians were well explained by Clifford Langley in an article published in Times /20 May, 1989/:

"The Jewish instinct in a place like that is to leave it as desolate as possible, physically, morally and philosophically. Auschwitz is not sacred to the Jews; it is very opposite of sacred. To extract solace or meaning from such things, let alone find holiness there, is to try to mitigate the evil, to pretend it was somehow not as bad as it really was, and thus belittle the millions who died there.

But the Christians instinct is the exact reverse it is to sanctify such a place. Christians consecrate their cemeteries, build shrines where accidents or executions happen, celebrate their martyrs and call the place of martyrdom holy. There is also a convent of nuns on the site of the gallows at Tyburn, praying for peace and for the dead".

Thus the theological view of Auschwitz is quite different for Jews and for Christians. For Jews it is a place of absolute evil. For Christian the major theological question is: how was such an evil made possible in a world in which - as we believe - salvation has already been accomplished.

10. We need each other

With so few Jews left in Poland we need now the Jews living outside our country, first of all, to help us better understand Jewish thinking, Jewish belief and theology and Jewish reading of the Bible. For without your help we would not be able to understand the very roots of Christianity, we would not be true Christians.

However, it seems to me, that in a certain, even if not the same way the Jews also need us. Poles and Jews, Christians and believers of Mosaic faith need each other to understand better our common historical roots and our over thousand years old history on the Polish soil but also to understand our proper

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May be in Poland - you feel much more than elsewhere
the inseparability of the Polish and Jewish history
and the common spiritual heritage

identity and own spiritual heritage. As Rabbi Byron Sherwin
stated rightly:

"In encountering this /Jewish/ presence, this haunting
presence, Christian Poles encounter their own history,
their own identity, their own selves". In the same time
this very presence "provides the Jewish people with a
physical link to their own spiritual heritage".

*Let me illustrate it by a wonderful story originating
from the famous hasidic Rabb. Israel of Kozienice*

Thus, for instance, on the Jewish New Year, it is customary to
eat apples dipped in honey. Why honey? asked the hasidic master,
Israel of Koznitz /Kozienice/. Because, he said, the Hebrew word
for honey is devash. Its three letters - D-B-S - are an acronym
for the Polish saying: Daj Boże szczęście /God give us good
luck/.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

11. Sign of hope

Yes, it is true, we need the Jews. We need their help in
preserving the Jewish heritage in Poland, which is also for us
a precious part of our national culture and history. And we need
their help to implement the Geneva Declaration in the true
"Geneva spirit". We are honestly trying to view Auschwitz with
Jewish eyes, even if we cannot fully share Jewish interpretation.
And we are asking the Jews to try also to view the cross with
Christian and Polish eyes, even if they cannot accept its
meaning. We have been fighting in defense of the cross and of
very many crosses during the forty-five years of Communist
oppression. And this we cannot forget.

In the heat of polemics we are in danger of losing sight of
a most important question: What is the meaning of the Geneva
Declaration, and what is the meaning of the Auschwitz Interfaith
Center, of Information, Education, Meeting and Prayer which is
new under construction? What is its true purpose and whom will it
serve? The Pope, John Paul II, at the meeting with the represen-

tatives of the Jewish Community in Vienna, on June 24th, 1988, spoke about his own vision of the Center:

"Its purpose is to explore the Shoah as well as the martyrdom of the Polish people and that of the other European nations during the time of National Socialism and also to enter into discussions about them. We hope that it will bear rich fruit and serve as an example for other nations. Initiatives of that kind will also enrich the civil life of all social groups, animating them to care in mutual respect for the weak, the needy and marginalized, to overcome hostilities and prejudices, as well as to defend human rights, especially the right to religious freedom for each individual and community" /The Secretariat for Promoting Christian Unity Information service, No.68, 2988 II-IV o. 171/.

As Catholics and Jews we do not fully understand our divergent customs, beliefs, and sensibilities. Both communities use different words and give them different meanings. One thing is certain: we, Jews and Christians, must learn to know each other. And thus education appears as the only way to ward off and to make impossible a repetition of the Auschwitz monstrosity. This means education of all human beings in mutual respect and in true brotherhood. In such a country as Poland, almost entirely Catholic, this is now the first and most important task of our Church. We must begin this education in the beginning, in the primary schools. We are always asked if our children are taught programs about Jews, Judaism, and the Shoah. We are fully aware of this necessity, but, please, take into account that we are only now beginning to teach our own history in our schools. Until last year the first priority was a history of social and labor movements, from the time of Spartacus to the Great Russian Revolution.

Only an appropriate education can lead to a fruitful encounter which presupposes that we are opening ourselves to our sisters and brothers, to their needs, feelings and persuasions, even if we cannot altogether share or understand them. And such a mutual encounter ends quite naturally in a prayer which we owe to all those who died with the prayer on their lips, Jews to Jews, Christians to Christians.

So allow me humbly commit now our common sorrows, concerns and
deeds to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who is also the God
of Jesus Christ, and say:

"And let the grace of the Lord our God be upon us
and confirm the work of our hands,
the work of our hands confirm Thou!"

/Ps. 90,17/.

