

CD-1089 Transcription

Address at 92nd Street YMHA on John Paul II and the Jews [2].

20 October 1987.

Marc Tanenbaum:

And guilt. That's what Jews are concerned about. As Rabbi Heschel used to say, "I am not interested in your collective guilt. I am interested in your collective responsibility for events that are to unfold." But when you add to that the fact that the Soviet Union and East European countries, including Poland, set up monuments in front of the Warsaw Ghetto, in which the word "Jew" is not mentioned, in which the monument over Babi Yar does not mention Jews were killed, Russians were killed. Which is to say that that becomes the final, the final offense to the memory of the six million Jewish men, women, and children who were massacred. Jews are aware of the fact that perhaps more than 25 million other humans were killed during World War II. And God knows their memories should be honored in terms of the issue of dehumanization that that represents. But the Jews were the only people who were singled out for the Final Solution, for the total extermination of the entire Jewish people. [01:00] And now, the effort is made to revise that history. And what happened recently in Germany when Pope John Paul II came to Germany? He started a process of beatification, and all of you

read about that. Edith Stein. And then the beatification of Father Rupert Meyer, who resisted Nazi tyranny. And then Cardinal von Galen. And that's all the pope said. In effect, he was saying, and on one questions, one stand in respect for the right of Christians to engage in whatever internal acts of beatification is appropriate to them. That's not a matter for Jews or anyone else to stand in judgment on. But then to stand back and look at the cultural impact of that, the historical impact of that, to select people in Germany before the entire German population, one was a martyr to the Nazis because she was a Catholic. The Jewish birth of Edith Stein [02:00] was negated, until the Jews demanded the acknowledgement that she was in fact killed because she was a Jew, as were the other Jews who were with her, not because she was a Catholic nun. And then Father Rupert Meyer, who was indeed one of the few resisters against the Nazis in the Catholic priesthood. And Cardinal von Galen, who resisted the Nazis but only on one issue, euthanasia. He did not say a word about the extermination of Jews. But what began to emerge out of that experience in Germany was that Germans were being given the portrait that the German Catholic Church and the German Catholic people and the German people were essentially victims of the Nazi Holocaust. They resisted the Nazi Holocaust. And then when you don't mention Jews, and you take the name of Jews off monuments, and they disappear off Babi

Yar, and they disappear off the Warsaw Ghetto memorials. In 50 years, [03:00] the Nazi Holocaust will be portrayed as an attack on the Christian world, with Christians resisting it, and six million Jews will have gone up, as Elie Wiesel says, "Their lives went up in smoke, and the sky became their cemetery." We dealt with that. And we made it very clear that we find that intolerable. And morally unacceptable. And that we would not stand by if that pattern continues. We made that point so powerfully with the entire Vatican delegation, with Cardinal Casaroli the next morning, and with the pope himself on noon day at Castel Gandolfo. Now before that time, when we began making our voices known, in mid-August before we came to Rome, [04:00] the Vatican knew that this was an unconditional issue for us to be dealt with, and its full moral and historical accuracy. And so the pope and the Vatican found it necessary to send a letter in advance of our audience, in advance of our meeting, addressed to Archbishop John May, a wonderful man. In the present he's in St. Louis; he's the archbishop of St. Louis. He's been a friend for many years. A very great friend of Israel and of Soviet Jewry, and Jewish causes, who in St. Louis has been involved in textbook studies removing anti-Semitism from Catholic textbooks. A really genuine *ohav yisrael*. A great friend of the Jewish people. The pope sent a letter to him as president of the Catholic hierarchy saying the following. "In my pastoral

concerns, journeys, and meetings, and in my teachings during the years of my Pontificate, I have constantly sought to develop and deepen our relationships with the Jews, [05:00] our elder brothers, and the faith of Abraham. And I therefore encourage and bless not only this initiative, but the initiatives of all those who in fidelity to the directives of Second Vatican Council, animated by goodwill and religious hope, foster relationships of mutual esteem and friendship, and promote the Jewish-Christian dialogue in the appropriate places, and with due theological competence and historical objectivity." And then he goes on to say, "With our hearts filled with this unyielding hope, we Christians approach with immense respect the terrifying experience of the extermination, the *Shoah*." The pope writes in this text, "the *Shoah*." An indication of his effort to understand how Jews understood the Nazi experience. that the terrifying experience of extermination, the *Shoah*, suffered by the Jews during the Second World War, and we seek to grasp its most authentic, specific, and universal [06:00] meaning. "There is no doubt," he adds, "that the sufferings endured by the Jews are also for the Catholic Church a motive of sincere sorrow, especially when one thinks of the indifference and sometimes resentment which in the particular historical circumstances, had divided Jews and Christians." He goes on then to acknowledge that there will be a conference in December, which we will be

holding with the Vatican in Washington DC on this theme alone. The Nazi Holocaust, Christian and Jewish perspectives. Well beyond that, during the course of that day, and I'll review this quickly, I'm hoping that perhaps during some discussion time, if we're not all asphyxiated by the heat in the room by that time, that we'll get a chance to tease out some of these themes that I have just touched upon once over. Because it is not possible to deal with all of them in great detail. But in addition to that issue, there was a presentation made -- I made the first presentation dealing with the Nazi Holocaust, Waldheim, and this question of revisionism. [07:00] Then there was a presentation made by Rabbi [Lieb Chaniki?] of ADL, on the question of anti-Semitism in the world today, especially now in Austria. The Waldheim papal audience led to a result, where earlier on in June, the polls demonstrated, at least as some of the Austrian pollsters indicated, that there was something like 10-12% of the population in Austria harbored anti-Jewish feelings. As a result of the whole attack that emerged on the Pop-Waldheim meeting, by the end of July, and I was in Vienna the week of July 19th and was shown the poll that was just made, the anti-Jewish attitudes had more than doubled to something like 24%. And so we began getting into the questions of the responsibility of the Church in dealing with that, especially in predominantly Catholic countries, not only in Europe [08:00] but in Latin America as

well. We dealt with a number of other issues, and then as our major issue of the day, we dealt with the question of diplomatic relations with Israel. Now, we'll need more time to talk about this, perhaps we can do it in discussion. I just want to say on this point, it is essential to understand that on the one hand, the arguments given by the Vatican for not moving beyond the present de facto diplomatic relations with Israel, all the formalistic reasons are given are really legal fictions. They exist on the books, and they're given as public reasons, as to why the Holy See has not moved toward formal diplomatic relations. I think at the same time, it's important to acknowledge, there does exist de facto diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel. [09:00] Whenever I go to Rome, and we get involved in this discussion, I spend time with the Israeli ambassador there, now Ambassador Drory, and they have an expert on the Vatican, whose name is Michael Peled. And they tell me, "We have absolutely complete access to the Vatican. We can see anybody we want to see, almost whenever we want to set dates that are mutually convenient." And Drory goes in to the Secretary of State, and Justice and Peace, and any other secretariat. The Vatican also has now sent hundreds of priests from papal universities to Israel to study and learn there, and they come back, and generally become very positive interpreters of the reality of Israeli life today. The issue of

Israel is in a state of belligerency with Jordan and other Arab countries indeed is there. The fact that diplomatic borders, that borders have not been established under international, juridical competencies, firmly established under international law, that's also a real [10:00] reason. That has not stopped the Vatican from having diplomatic relations between Iran and Iraq, who have been fighting over their borders for decades. Nor had it stopped diplomatic relations, although there was a form of diplomatic relations with Poland and Germany, when they were fighting Oder-Neisse border. The real underlying reason for Vatican resistance to establishing full *de jure* diplomatic relations with Israel is fear, part of it real, part of it in some ways pretext, but a genuine concern over reprisals against Christians in Arab countries. The first time I came to the Vatican Secretariat of State five years ago to discuss with one of their people the question of diplomatic relations, all that they wanted to talk about was Lebanon. Because in Lebanon there have been 100,000, at least 100,000 Maronite Catholics who have been massacred by Shiite Muslims and Sunni Muslims, and Druzes, and they've [11:00] returned the compliment as well. But the Vatican has been impotent to try to put an end to the killing of Christians. Beyond that, you now have Arab countries, one of the key people in the Vatican's Secretariat of State, Archbishop Silvestrini, two years ago, went to Syria, met with Assad, and

Assad said to him, in a report that I got from confidential sources, Assad read the Riot Act to the Vatican, that if you as much as lift a finger to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, we are not responsible for what happens with the Christians in our country. So the intimidation goes on. There are roughly 10 million Christians in the Arab Muslim world. And the Vatican has a legitimate right to be concerned about them. But over the years now, what has become clear to me, and it became clear to me especially in our relationship with the government of Spain, Prime Minister González, three years ago, promised Shimon Peres that when he became Prime Minister of Spain, [12:00] he would regard it as essential to Spain's foreign policy to establish full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. And when González announced this, and began announcing it, as Foreign Minister began announcing it, over a period of three years, the Arab League announced that if that happens they will cut off diplomatic relations, they will cut off trade, commercial and trade relations with Spain. Saudi Arabia began a whole campaign against the Spanish government inside Madrid and outside of Madrid. González, before he moved to establish diplomatic relations, wrote a letter to the head of the Arab League and said "Spain is a proud sovereign nation. We will not allow any foreign government to dictate the foreign policy of our government." And within two weeks after that,

González moved to establish full diplomatic relations with the State of Israel. Guess what? Nothing happened. Not a single commercial contract [13:00] was canceled by the Arab League, or by Saudi Arabia, or Kuwait, who were up to eyeballs in business and trade and development with Spain. And this is the issue that we've now begun to say to the Vatican and other Christian friends, "If you appease this kind of blackmail and intimidation, you are in fact encouraging and inviting worse intimidation." When the Americans began to stand up against terrorism and violence, we've had the lowest incidence of terrorism in the world today, as a result of the foreign policy of the American government, west European governments and counterterrorism. When west European governments began to be soft, when you could walk through Rome and see that the terrorists could walk through with hand grenades as if it were a sieve, they began intimidating governments. Athens, Rome, Vienna. Once the governments made up their mind and made it clear they would not tolerate this kind of [14:00] behavior. And now, the Vatican is being exposed to that kind of understanding of its need to reevaluate its relationship with Arab Muslim governments, and our own government is beginning to take a look at that in those terms as well. In any case, the issue of diplomatic relations with Israel requires some fundamental revision in our thinking, and we need much more time to deal

with that. I simply want to make this point. It will sound tough to some Christian friends, but Jews need to understand this as well. There is something misplaced about the way Jews come to talk to the Vatican, and to the Catholic Church about diplomatic relations. Almost beseeching. Come, why don't you establish diplomatic relations? Israel, why don't you recognize Israel? The only democracy in the Middle East. Some of the quality almost of beseeching. I've just completed a long paper, I don't want to take the time to review its substance, [15:00] somehow the imagery is emerging as if the Vatican is the winner in the Middle East, and Israel has been the loser in the Middle East. My friends, that is not the reality of what has been going on in the past 40 years in the Middle East. The Vatican's foreign policy with regard to Israel and Arab nations has been fundamentally a series of diplomatic failures. The Vatican began in 1896 and early 1900s pressing for the internationalization of Palestine. They failed, with emergence of the Partition Plan. Then the Vatican shifted its focus to the internationalization of Jerusalem. It failed, mainly because Jordan did not want it as much as Israel. The Vatican then began pressing for the internationalization of the holy places. It failed, because the Arabs did not want it as much as the Jews did not want it. Now the Vatican is talking about some form of international statute, to assure safety to the holy places, and that the Israelis are

prepared to explore, and in fact [16:00] there are formulae to consider doing that. Therefore, the issue today is for the Vatican, it's as fairly much in the same situation as the Soviet Union is in the Middle East. If you want to be part of the game of negotiating peaceful negotiations in the Middle East, then you better become a real player, which means establishing full diplomatic relations, both with Israel and with Jordan. The Kremlin today is falling all over itself to find some appropriate way to establish diplomatic relations with Israel, while not alienating Arab states. Because the Vatican simply has nobody to talk to in any formal diplomatic way as long as it has no diplomatic relations, and that is also true of the Vatican. Increasingly, that's beginning to dawn on some Vatican experts and the Secretariat of State, that it's a different reality than the illusion, if not delusion, that has been lived on for the past 40 years. I want to wind up [17:00] now and hope we'll have a chance to talk a little bit further about this. What happened in Rome? What happened in Castel Gandolfo? What happened in Miami? I don't really want to be vulgar about it; I don't want to play cheaply with it. But it is troublesome. I've spent 25 years of my life working in the area of Catholic-Jewish relations, Vatican-Jewish relations. I had the privilege of being the only rabbi present as a guest observer, invited by Cardinal Bea, to nurtured the whole Vatican declaration on

Catholic-Jewish relations. I know what Vatican-Jewish relations and Catholic-Jewish relations were before the Vatican Council. When I was in Baltimore, Maryland, a Jewish parent once came to my home and brought me a [18:00] Baltimore catechism, 1937. His daughter was friendly with a Catholic child in a Catholic parochial school. And he showed me the catechism, and there was horror on his face. And I opened up the Baltimore catechism, and I could not believe what I read. Questions and answers in the Baltimore catechism used in every Catholic parochial school in America. "Describe why it was that God punished the Jews and made them a wandering people." "Why are the Jews called Christ killers?" "Why will the Jews never find salvation without accepting Jesus as their Lord and Savior?" "Why do Jews bring anti-Semitism on themselves?" The catechism, the Baltimore catechism, was a catechism of anti-Semitism. Read now a Catholic textbook, the Allyn and Bacon series, any of the six major Catholic series used in every Catholic textbook in the United States. [19:00] There is not a single anti-Jewish reference in a single Catholic textbook used anywhere in this country today. There is not a single reference to Jews as Christ killers in a single textbook used in Catholic parochial schools or secondary schools. Even the crucifixion is described historically accurate. The textbooks breathe a new spirit of respect for Jews and Judaism and the synagogue, and Jewish history, Jewish

culture. In fact, one of my early problems, when after the Vatican Council, when it explicitly gave instructions in the 1974 Catholic Guidelines, which prohibited teaching the old teachings of contempt against the Jews, there were two wonderful Catholic nuns in Detroit who were preparing a new textbook series called *Come, Lord Jesus*. And in order to demonstrate, as one of them said to me, "You know, I come into my parochial schools, and I talk to my kids, they all think that Jesus was an Irishman. They were blond haired, blue eyed. And so I had an artist portray Jesus as he must have been, [20:00] a first century Palestinian Jewish child." And so they showed Jesus with dark features, and they showed Jesus wearing a yarmulke, standing in a synagogue, and underneath was a caption in Hebrew. And then in the portrait of Jesus, Jesus was shown with something of an elongated nose. I turned to one of the sisters and I said, "Sister, you can't do that. I'll have to call in the Anti-Defamation League if you begin with those stereotypes of first century Palestinian Jews." The point I want to make is that anyone who goes beneath the surface appearances, who has entered into what has happened in Catholic-Jewish relationships over the past 22 years since the adoption of the Vatican declaration in 1965, who knows of the extraordinary changes that have taken place in textbooks, in liturgy, in homilies, in relationships between seminaries, [21:00] Catholic and Jewish,

Christian and Jewish, who know something about the work together and social justice causes, and refugees and world hunger, and homeless, and many other issues. Who knows now that today, a Cardinal O'Connor will come before a rally for Soviet Jews, a quarter of a million Jews are present, and will come and commit the Catholic Church to support the cause of Soviet Jewry. We may differ with him on other issues. But for that to happen all over the United States, and to find increasingly millions of Catholics and Christians who understand the importance of Israel and Jerusalem to the Jewish people. We have in fact made greater progress in the past 20 years in overcoming misunderstanding and increasing understanding between Catholics and Jews, and Christians and Jews of all denominations, than we have in the past 1,900 years. We dare not allow that to be jeopardized by the foolishness or the unwisdom of that one episode that took place in Vatican City [22:00] on June 25th, 1987. Thank you for your patience.

Cathy Behrend:

The great orator really needs water after that presentation, and it really was most informative, and as we had presented, it was an insider's look, and an insider's knowledge of what was really going on there. I have some of the questions that you've submitted. "Doesn't the universal pastor have a moral duty to

refuse to meet with Waldheim? Does he not have a higher duty to moral law than to political protocol? And if not, isn't his moral authority a lie?" [23:00]

Marc Tanenbaum:

That's a good Jewish question on Catholic morality. And I suppose one ought to be prepared for a good Catholic question on Jewish morality. I think that is a serious issue. And I think it's exactly that ambiguity that led to the confused responses in both communities. Jews took Catholics seriously. And Catholics said that the pope is the Vicar of Christ on Earth, the supreme moral teacher of the Church. By his own self-definition, Jews expected a higher order of behavior from him than you would do from the guy who's out selling tokens in a subway station. Or a politician, even in Washington, who makes compromises, and one doesn't expect a higher level of moral authority. But in fact, I think there is a fundamental problem, and it's a problem for the Vatican. It's not only a question, [24:00] not only a question of Waldheim. If you want to see this in perspective, and I said this very forcefully and directly to Cardinal Casaroli, as we did later on to other people in the Vatican. It's not known generally, but it's an insight into how this becomes inexplicable to normal, rational intelligence. Now I don't know how many of you know it, but the pope is planning

to go to southern Africa in September 1988. He was planning to go to the Republic of South Africa, which was to be the anchor of his trip, in September 1988. The black Catholics in South Africa sent a message to the pope saying, "We do not want you to come to South Africa, because in May of 1984, you received President Piet Botha, the President of South Africa, [25:00] as an honored guest. You have conferred honor on our architect of apartheid, who is responsible for our suffering. It is incomprehensible to us that our Holy Father would give such a place of honor to a man who's responsible for our oppression. And therefore, with all respect, stay home. We will not receive you." So the pope is going to go to Botswana, and Mozambique, and Zaire, and Zambia. He will not be allowed to cross the border into South Africa. And I said to Cardinal Casaroli, Your Eminence, we understand how black Catholics feel. We think it's important that you understand how both of us feel." There is a point at which this purity of moral purpose becomes humanly destructive. You must [26:00] weigh the consequences of those audiences. It's not only now Piet Botha, and Arafat, and Waldheim. Paul VI received Idi Amin. Idi Amin massacred a half million black Christians, half of them Catholic, half of them Anglicans. And they were enraged, both of those Christian bodies in Uganda, that the pope would receive them. But there's this kind of moral neutrality, we receive everybody and listen to

everybody. It's a way of being the mediator of the world. You also could end up justifying tyrants, and fascists, and totalitarians. And that simply has got to be pressed home, and that's an internal Catholic problem to deal with.

Cathy Behrend:

"Didn't the pope escape culpability for meeting with Waldheim by your meeting with him? Wouldn't more have been accomplished by repudiation through a total boycott of the pope during his visit to the United States?"

Marc Tanenbaum:

Yeah, we weighed that. We weighed the question very seriously, [27:00] we had -- my wife and I gave up our summer vacation; we weighed that so seriously. Because we literally were meeting day after day after day, with representatives of every major Jewish group, and especially the Orthodox community, which made up its mind for its own theological reasons, they were not going to go. And they would not allow a Orthodox rabbi to take part in the ceremony. An Orthodox rabbi was scheduled to be the spokesman of the whole Jewish community in Miami. The Orthodox rabbis vetoed that. They would not even let him sit on the platform next to the pope; that's how vehemently they felt about it. They were

entitled to their feelings; we think it was counterproductive and unwise. Look, the pope lives in Rome, in Vatican City. Very important, charismatic personality. And clearly, he has defined his papacy in quite dramatic ways. He is the most traveling pope in the world; probably [28:00] even Saint Peter didn't travel as much as he did. He didn't have TWA planes to help him out. We live in the United States of America. There are 52 million Catholics in this country who are our neighbors, our friends, fellow citizens in this society, who are committed with us to building a democratic, pluralist society. It is not in our interest for the sake of [*Äusrettende Harz?*], even for the past 1,900 years, to reject this pope in a way that would lead to the alienation of 52 million Catholics. Look, my friends, if you live in the real world, and not in the world of abstraction, we are going to have to deal with the question of Jesse Jackson, and 23 million blacks in America, and the same Jews that are saying to us, reject the pope, reject Jesse Jackson. One has ways to dealing with Jesse Jackson. But what do we want to end up [29:00] doing? Alienate 52 million Catholics; alienate 23 million blacks? Alienate Hispanics on the English issue, the bilingual issue? Do we want to create our own self-isolation in America? Do we want to bring about our own self-ghettoization in America? We would in fact bring that about. Now, most of the people who are saying to us, "The hell with him; reject him,

boycott him. Never mind what the American Catholics feel," are people who come to us from Borough Park, Crown Heights, who have made their own decision, that they want their own ghetto, upholstered ghetto. They have the right to live there; it's an open, free society. They do not have the right to impose Borough Park on the rest of American Jewry. We resist the Borough Park-ization of American Jews. Any event, one of the upcroppings of having made that decision is that I think we contained a great deal of the damage. [30:00] Our friendship now with the American Catholic hierarchy, and with millions of Catholics in America, is intact. For the wisdom of having made the decision, and that in fact what happened in Miami was a quite constructive experience, generally. Before one comes to a conclusion of what happened in Miami, read the text of both of the speeches. Two-thirds of the text of the pope's speech in Miami was altogether remarkably positive speech. There were only two phrases, one about Pius XII, the other about a Palestinian homeland, which the *New York Times* picked up and made the lead story. But that was not the text of the speech. Two-thirds of that speech were among the most affirmative statements that any pope has made in 1,900 years of history. That's the balance and the perspective of what happened.

Cathy Behrend:

"What has been the reaction in Israel to the Vatican meeting?"

Mark Tanenbaum:

Borough Park. It's extremely interesting. And it is really [31:00] one of the issues that are before us. The lack of awareness, except for a small core of Jews in Israel who are involved in Catholic-Jewish and Vatican-Jewish relations. There's a group called the Israel Interfaith Committee, whose chairman is now Dr. Jeffrey Wigoder, who comes originally from England; we went to school together in New York. He settled in Israel. Except for people like Wigoder, Professor [Tzever Blovski?], a few other professors at Hebrew University, some people in the foreign ministry, who understand Israel's relation with the rest of the world. Most of this business was either a big yawn, couldn't care less, or there was among the Orthodox community active hostility, not unlike that of [Lebovic Tzarevy?]. Who needs it, who wants it, why are you going there, kissing the pope's ring. Which, many of them said, they saw a priest kissing the pope's ring and they concluded that was a rabbi or a Jew [32:00] kissing the pope's ring. But it's one of the issues we have to deal with, and we have in fact created an institute on Israel-Diaspora relations. Because the isolation of many Israelis from the rest of the world, except for those who have had experiences out in the foreign service, or economics,

or trade, is a major issue for Israel's future as a democratic, pluralist society. And we've now, you know we've been running programs with Germany for more than 20 years, of exchange programs, bringing Germans to the United States. We've now started a program four years ago, of bringing young Israelis, journalists, politicians, academics, housewives, writers, to come to the United States to visit the Jewish community. And then when you sit in evaluation sessions with them, it is staggering. They say, "We had no idea." Their perceptions in terms of Zionist ideology [33:00] is that the *galut* is to expire. It is somehow going to self-destruct by itself. It has no vitality, no future. And besides anti-Semitism, we're overwhelmed on, and therefore they simply see this as something to be endured. And the young Israelis who come here, who go to our schools, who go to Brandeis, who go to the seminaries, who go to Leo Baeck Institute, Yad Vashem, cannot believe that American Jews have at least a vital a Jewish religious, cultural, literary life, productive life, as they have. And for some of them, it's changed their whole perception. We bring young mayors to this country. And we're now sending young Jews to Israel as well to have that experience. So for many of them, they were reacting, many of those who reacted in the press to the whole Vatican episode were reacting out of that isolation, or that traditional view that many Jews engaged in here.

Finally, 1,900 years of history have to be dealt with. And that's the way some of those reactions took place [34:00] there.

Cathy Behrend:

"In light of today's revelation of the UN's involvement in the Waldheim oversight of his Nazi past, what should be the position of the American, and perhaps the New York public?"

Marc Tanenbaum:

I'm not sure about the point of the question, whether the question has to do with attitudes toward the United Nations generally, or whether it has to do with specific reaction to the behavior of the United Nations in allowing Waldheim to go through some screening process which did not screen out his past. Anyway, I think they are separate questions. and that would take us far afield in a very larger discussion, because there clearly are some fundamental shifts taking place, not only in terms of the United States' attitudes toward the United Nations, and probably toward UNESCO now, with a new director general in place. But the fact that Gorbachev is now reversing the Soviet Union's position with regard to the [35:00] United Nations; he's talking about paying up all of their past bills, which they did not pay to the UN, and taking the United Nations seriously, as some instrument for dealing with geopolitical

problems. I daresay that will have effect on America's reaction to the United Nations, if Gorbachev in fact acts out what he's pronounced will be a changed attitude toward the UN. I don't know what one can say; there's so much speculation about how Waldheim got through the screening process. And a lot of that has to do with rumor. There are all kinds of reports that Soviet Union had a file on Waldheim that they knew from the Yugoslavs that they knew that he was in fact involved in the Nazi war machine, and people were saying that in fact there was evidence that he was a Nazi war criminal per se. That evidence has not yet emerged in the World Jewish Congress material. I have just gone through the Yugoslav war crime files [36:00] the other night, and a great deal of it is suggestion that he was part of a group, Group IC, as part of that military machine. It says that group was charged with certain things; nowhere is there specific identification of exactly what Waldheim did. Nowhere is there indication that he pulled a trigger. And we're talking to the Justice Department now, and the Department of State, to try to try to get a resolution of that issue. But one of the statements that had been made is about the Soviet Union in fact had evidence on him. The Soviet Union wanted to veto a Finnish candidate who was both a Socialist and a Jew, who was running for Secretary General. They vetoed him, agreed on Waldheim; the United States agreed. They're the two parties who name the

Secretary General, then with the consent of the West European powers, generally. And that apparently the Soviet Union used this blackmail to try to force Waldheim to conform to the Soviet position while he was Secretary General at the United Nations.

[37:00] Well that requires more evidence and more detail and examination, but those rumors are around all over the place, including among some people in the United Nations with whom we've spoken.

Cathy Behrend:

"How much, in your opinion, does the pope's attitude reflect the attitude of other in the Vatican hierarchy? How much does he shape that attitude?"

Marc Tanenbaum:

Remember Churchill's statement about the Kremlin? He said something to the effect that it is a mystery wrapped up in an enigma, wrapped up in something else. It is a very complicated institution. And one must really become a student of Vatican diplomacy, Vatican foreign policy, Vatican language, Vatican symbols, to really understand what is going on, in relation to these issues. The Vatican engages, [38:00] much as the Kremlin does, in calculated ambiguity. There is -- if there is a simple way of making a statement, and a complex way filled with

indirection, it'll be the ambiguity, in order to preserve the possibility, if you have to change your position later on, you never can be pinned down in the first place. Calculated ambiguity. So one must understand that ambiguity, and understand the nuclear phrases which have to be caught, that really state the intention. And that, if you read the communiqué we issued joining with the Vatican, it was remarkable. You could actually understand it. It was actual clarity; we insisted on clear statements. Subjects and predicates. And we got that in our joint communiqué. Now, with regard to the pope's views, it's difficult to say this because of popular imagery. [39:00] There is a book published of all of the statements this pope has made since he was elevated to the Papacy in 1978, on Jews and Judaism. With every Jewish community he has met with, wherever he has gone. Mainz, Germany; in Poland in Warsaw; in Mexico; in Venezuela. Australia, Buenos Aires. Except for a few rare circumstances, read those texts. He has said more, more affirmative things about his views on respect for Jews and Judaism. Of his attitudes of condemnation of anti-Semitism, of his attitudes toward the Nazi Holocaust. The only place where he remains consistently vague and ambiguous is on the issue of Jerusalem and Israel. He always ends up trailing off in a vague cloud about the Holy Land and the harmony of Jews, Christians, and Muslims there. And that has to do with their policy, in

terms of concern for [40:00] Arab Christians. But this pope has said more, and has done more on these issues, than any pope in history, except for Pope John XXIII. And we want to keep it that way. we want to go beyond where we are. And therefore -- now in terms of conflict, sure there's conflict. That there are old line traditional Catholic traditionalists in the curia, who are anti-Semites, goes without question. When I was in Rome during the Vatican Council, it was hair-raising to listen to two or three cardinals, a Cardinal [Segni?], to get up and deliver the old stuff. "The Vatican cannot give up its teaching; the Jews are Christ killers. They are punished by God. The covenant with them has been superseded. We are the new Israel. They have been displaced." He did it in Latin. The American Catholic hierarchy was absolutely enraged. [41:00] And Cardinal Cushing called me in -- he was staying at the North American College -- his wonderful Irish accent, and he said, "Rabbi, that was shameful. I'm going to get up tomorrow in the Council, and I'm going to tell them Council Fathers how we American bishops feel about that. It's garbage. We don't believe that stuff." And he says, "I'll tell you something else. I'm not going to follow the rules and do it in Latin; I'm going to do it in all good American English." And he did. He got up and made a statement of total repudiation of what [Segni?] said, and said it was an offense to the Church and an insult to the Holy See. So that is still

there. And there is a constant struggle that goes on, and why should we have all the fun? Liberal American Catholics are complaining. You saw what happened when the pope came here in this country. You saw Catholic gays demonstrating, women demonstrating. There is all of this turmoil, which was started by Vatican Council II. And it goes on, on a whole range of issues, of personal morality, public morality, social justice issues. And of course, the Jewish question, because of its 1,900 [42:00] years of history, and its singularity in the Catholic Church, also is subjected to that crossfire. What is important for us is to find ways to isolate those people who now violate the spirit of Nostre Aetate, the Vatican declaration. And to give encouragement to those affirmative people, who indeed believe that this is the new teaching of the new Church, and that insist on moving forward. We have a stake in their success. We do not have a stake in undermining them.

Cathy Behrend:

This is a real insider's question and answer. "What were the questions, or what were the significant differences, if any, among the Jewish delegates, in terms of strategies and goals? The significant, important strategic differences?"

Marc Tanenbaum:

Well I -- the differences between our delegations took place before we left for Rome. [43:00] There, we had a real battle, a genuine encounter in differences of understanding of how the Vatican works, and what would be the best strategy of dealing with these issues. There were people who came from the traditional Jewish community who wanted nothing less than unconditional surrender. We were told by some Orthodox rabbis, Ultra-Orthodox rabbis, that unless you get the pope to apologize for Waldheim publicly, it's a failure. Unless you get the pope to recognize Israel while you're there, full diplomatic relations, it's a failure. That's some package to carry. It also says something about how naïve or unreal this mentality is, in regard to how the world works. These same people, when I talk to them about going to see Gorbachev [44:00] about letting out 400,000 Jews, I don't think it would occur to them, mainly because of their own involvement in the Soviet Jewry movement, that you come to Gorbachev and we say, "We want you to apologize for Stalin's purges, and we want 400,000 Jews out now, or the mission is a failure." When you're engaged in a long, tedious process of unpacking the issues, and if you can get 20 Jews out who are prisoners of conscience, *kol hamarbeh harei zeh meshubach*. More blessings to you. But to see that only as part of the process of unfolding, allowing the process to work, and keeping pressure going to make sure the process moves faster

rather than slower. And the same strategy applies to the Vatican. What has been accumulated in 1,900 years -- read Catholic historians; don't read Jewish historians. Read Father Flannery's book *The Anguish of the Jews*, of what has gone on in the Christian West, from the first century to the 20th century, [45:00] in every country in Western Europe, in terms of what Jews have suffered. And the demonology against the Jews. That whole medieval cosmology that the forces of light, the forces of Christ, and the forces of Antichrist, and Jews are the Antichrist. And look at the iconography in the art in Christian West. Look at the statues in front of the Church of Strasbourg: the Church proud; the Synagogue bent over, humbled, broken. It has been part of the culture, of the wallpaper of most of Western Christian civilization. That the Jews have been rejected by God; they are an accursed race. And that has been taught generation after generation. You know, I've been going into Oberammergau for the past 20 years, trying to try to help change the Passion Plays. It's conceivable; you see Nazis there, walking around in Lederhosen, who would no more give up the Passion Play, and this imagery of Jews with long nose. That's part of their faith. And they're raised on their --

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