



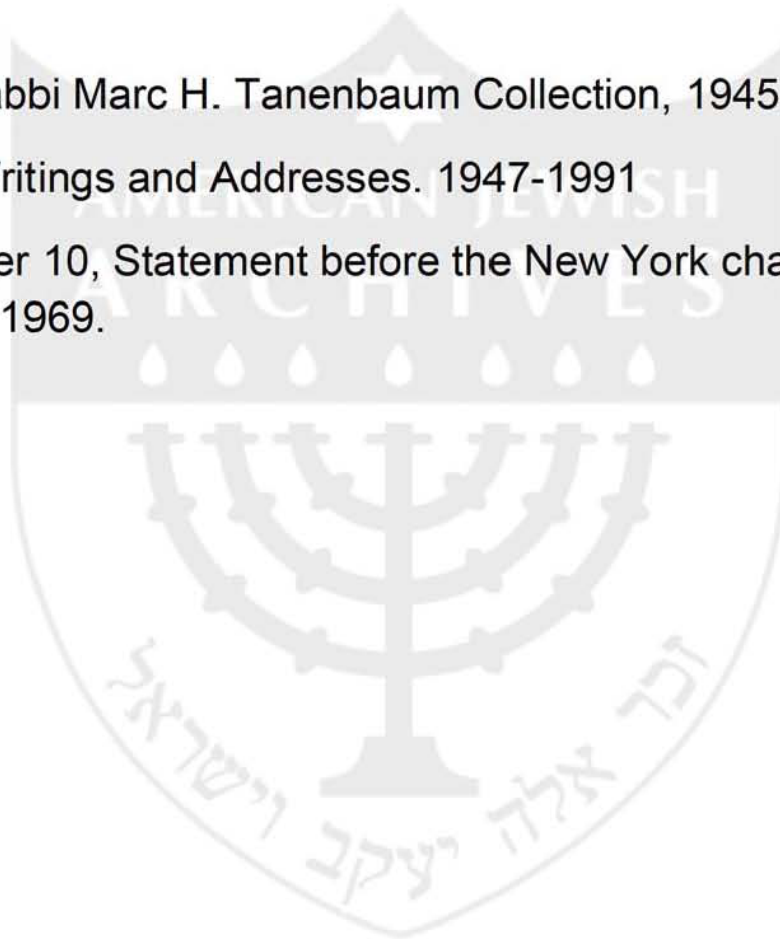
THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 2, Folder 10, Statement before the New York chapter of AJC,
12 January 1969.



STATEMENT BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL
DIRECTOR OF INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS OF THE
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, BEFORE THE NEW YORK
CHAPTER OF AJC, SUNDAY, JANUARY 12, 1969,
PLAZA HOTEL, NEW YORK CITY.

One of the most insidious developments which threaten to undermine much of the progress that has been made in Jewish-Christian relations, and which also imperils the already heavily strained civic peace of the United States, is a covert, unprecedented campaign on the part of foreign Arab propagandists to penetrate the entire institutional systems of the American Catholic and Protestant churches with propaganda that is not only blatantly anti-Israel and anti-Zionist but also, in many cases, virulently anti-Semitic.

This campaign involves a comprehensive, systematic, well-financed strategy which makes earlier Arab approaches to the churches appear to be amateur by contrast with the present effort. There is clear evidence available to us that Arab information specialists, operating out of Arab countries and especially Beirut, Lebanon--which has become a major source of anti-Israel and anti-Semitic printed materials and programs--in concert with Arab Information centers throughout the United States have moved massively to influence the policies and education and information programs of the Church institutions. These include world and national interdenominational bodies in Christendom, individual denominations, church leaders, especially in the overseas missions fields and foreign affairs commissions, seminaries, mass media and Christian official publications.

The content of the anti-Semitic aspect of this Arab effort ranges from sophisticated theological anti-Judaism to the revival of Muslim versions of the crudest form of medieval Christian and Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda.

An example of how vulgar a form of anti-Semitism is being exploited by Arab propagandists in their campaign to reach Christian leaders is to be found in a four-page leaflet which invents a Muslim version of the medieval ritual blood libel charge and revives the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

The present propaganda effort of the Arab League governments among church groups and Christian leaders in the United States is the most skillful, well-organized effort to undermine the widespread sympathies of many Christians who believe in the moral and human right of the people and the state of Israel to exist without harassment.

A key aspect of this systematic effort is the careful and calculated use of Arab-Christian leaders, especially of the Eastern Orthodox and Coptic churches, who have intensified their pressures on the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches. In an interview given in the latest issue of the Ecumenical Press Service of the World Council of Churches, Gabriel Habib, Middle East

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Secretary for World Student Christian Federation, calls upon the World Council of Churches and its 232-member denominations throughout the world to carry out "a copernican mental change in the Christian understanding of Islam." That change Mr. Habib adds, should involve a breaking down of "the scandalous association of Christianity and Israel, since the State of Israel is considered a new form of Western aggression or a crusade against the Arabs and Islam."

A number of letters have been sent to Christian leaders in the Western world, and also numerous visits by Arab Orthodox and Coptic and other Christian leaders have taken place recently in which they have brought pressure to bear on the western churches to use their influence to mobilize support for the Arab cause.

Similar campaigns have been carried out in efforts to influence an anti-Israel and pro-Arab League policy in the Vatican and in the American Catholic church.

A careful examination of the Arab propaganda distributed in the American Christian community since the June 1967 Arab-Israel conflict discloses that Lebanon, which has generally been held to be the most moderate of the Arab states, has emerged as a primary center of anti-Israel and, in some instances, anti-Semitic propaganda. A spate of printed materials, including a master program to help American clergy promote the Arab cause in the churches and other media in the United States, has been poured into the church media of communication in the United States in an increasingly growing volume. The newsletters, brochures, and films have resulted from a series of seminars, workshops, and institutes held in Beirut since June 1967 at such centers as the University Christian Center, the Documentation Center for the Ecumenical Secretariat for Youth, the World Student Christian Federation, and the American University of Beirut. One of the theological documents issued to Western Christian leaders by 66 Protestant missionaries operating out of Beirut asserted that Israel had no claim to their support because "the Church is the new Israel" and the religious foundations of any Jewish claim to Israel has been superseded by the emergence of the Christian revelation.

A strategy kit prepared by an American clergyman following a Beirut seminar in May 1968 calls upon Protestant clergy to launch a boycott against tourist travel to Israel, and to encourage and support a massive Arab march and sit-in on Jerusalem.

Since June 1967, a series of pro-Arab groups have been established in the United States, organized mainly by Protestant clergymen, for the purpose of influencing a major shift of Protestant opinion behind the Arab League cause. Among the new groups created are the Americans for Justice in the Middle East and Americans for Middle East Understanding. The groups publish newsletters, several of which have contained articles of theological anti-Judaism content prepared by

Christian professors in the Arab world. In addition, at least a half dozen local grass-roots organizations have sprung up in various regions of the United States to promote pro-Arab sympathies on a city and state-wide basis. These groups have been responsible especially for stepped-up "letter-to-the-editor" campaigns in the local and national press advocating Christian support of the Arab League cause and often branding Israel in one-sided terms as responsible for the Middle East conflict.

Since June 1967, these accelerated Arab propaganda efforts have resulted in a more vigorous response from certain elements in the Protestant denominational structures whose anti-Israel, pro-Arab activities amount to virtual collusion with foreign Arab government representatives. These pro-Arab elements in the denominational and interdenominational structures have published completely one-sided studies on the "Middle East Refugee Problem," which make no reference at all to the plight of Jewish refugees in Arab countries. Both prior to and following the Athens airport-Beirut incidents, these pro-Arab elements sought to use their positions in their church institutions to influence the White House and State Department to reverse the decision to send phantom Jets to Israel, and then to end all aid to Israel.

Christian leaders who are concerned seriously about preserving the pluralist fabric of America, and who have any real concern about true and honest relations with the Jews of America, owe it to themselves and to their Christian conscience to examine where this external Arab program is ultimately leading them and their institutions. At stake is nothing less than retaining whatever credibility is now possible with the Jewish people that Christian church leaders care anything at all about combatting anti-Semitism in real ways, and that the gospel of reconciliation is seriously intended to help Jews and Arabs in the Middle East to achieve peace, rather than polarize them as the present Arab propaganda initiatives and some Christian responses are doing.

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