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VATICAN NEEDS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

~~Almost imperceptibly~~, Israeli diplomats and Jewish interfaith leaders have been undergoing a fundamental and far-reaching change in their attitudes toward the Vatican's ~~aggravating~~ refusal to establish full de jure diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

Since the creation of Israel in 1948, the general approach of Israeli and Jewish spokesmen has been one of either seeking to persuade or to pressure the Holy See into moving from de facto recognition toward full normalization of diplomatic ties with the Jewish State. Increasingly, Israeli and Jewish representatives have been coming to the conviction that the Vatican needs normal diplomatic relationships with Israel, far more than Israel requires it.

In many ways, the Holy See is in a geo-political box not unlike that of the Soviet Union in relation to Israel and Jordan. Not having ambassadors assigned to Jerusalem (and Amman), neither the Holy See nor the Kremlin are in a position at present to become real factors in Middle East peace negotiations. Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet's ~~imaginative~~ aggressive General Secretary, apparently recognizes these brute facts of Middle East realpolitik, and ~~is making~~ is making probes for correcting ~~their~~ the USSR's anomalous status. The Holy See seems to be content with a delusional alternative; namely, that having an Apostolic Delegate assigned to "Jerusalem and Palestine" who commutes between the Holy City and Amman ~~ix~~ delivering messages is sufficient for establishing the Vatican as a real actor in the Middle East drama. In the judgment of a number of Jewish and a growing group of Catholic experts, the Vatican's ~~fantasies~~ delusions are ~~is~~ courting a diplomatic disaster for the Holy See.

At the core of the revised Israeli and Jewish understanding of this question is the dawning of a realization that the Jewish world has been approaching the Vatican through its own delusions. To put it bluntly, the accepted scenario for decades has been that the Vatican has been the winner, and Israel (and world Jewry) the loser in the Middle East game. And consequently

the loser has felt compelled to beseech the ~~winner~~ winner to help the ~~loser~~ cut ~~his~~ losses by making a generous gesture of conferring full diplomatic ties with Israel. Apart from other moral and political defects, that beseeching posture has fed the Holy See's delusion that it is in some superior condition in relation to Israel's compelling need and that the Vatican might well drag its feet, using its reluctance to bestow moral ties as leverage to extract certain fundamental concessions from Israel regarding the ~~status~~ status of Jerusalem, ^{the holy places,} a Palestinian Homeland, tax benefits for Catholic institutions, among other ~~negotiations~~ accommodations.

The fatal flaw in both the Vatican and the Israeli (Jewish) delusions is that the actual history of events in the Middle East distate an altogether different scenario. A careful study of the record of the Vatican's foreign policy in relation to Israel - from the very beginnings of Zionism until the present ~~days~~ day - suggests that in fact the Vatican's ~~policy~~ policies toward the Jewish State have been virtually an unbroken ^(chain) record of diplomatic failures, and that Israel has emerged as consistent victor in its geopolitical objectives. Thus, it makes little sense for the winner to behave toward the loser as if the loser has some special benefit to grant ~~the winner~~, without which the winner could not conceivably survive. Let me make the case for the revised scenario.

There have been roughly four periods in the evolution of the Vatican's policies toward Zionism and the State of Israel:

I - 1896 to 1917 - From the inception of the Zionist movement in the late 1890s down to the creation of the State of Israel in 1947-48, the Vatican was mainly opposed to Zionism and its central objective - the establishment of a Jewish State in the Holy Land. The word "mainly" is intended as a qualifier because, in the context of general opposition during this period, there were some Papal and Vatican statements which were sympathetic to Jewish resettlement in Palestine for "humanitarian" reasons.

On May 19, ^{1896,} ~~1896~~ three months after the appearance of The Jewish State, Theodor Herzl had an interview with Msgr. Antonio Agliardi, the Papal

York-Steiner, that if all the Jews wanted was to be "admitted" to the land of their ancestors, he would regard that as a "humanitarian" endeavor and would not impede their efforts to found "colonies" in Palestine.

Such "sympathetic" expressions were subthemes to the mainline policies of the Holy See which opposed Zionism and the Jewish State during this period — primarily for theological and historical reasons.

See "Demonization of Jews"

The Vatican's anti-Zionism was a corollary of Catholic theological anti-Judaism. It was rooted in the classic Christian "teachings of contempt" which demonologically portrayed the Jews as an accursed race both because they rejected Jesus as their savior as well as for their being allegedly "Christ-killers." Exile from Palestine was God's punishment, and the precondition for their return to the Promised Land was their conversion to Christianity.

This theological opposition to the establishment (or reestablishment) of Jewish sovereignty over the Holy Land was reinforced by Catholic historiography. In that view, Constantine the Great had accepted ~~the~~ Christianity as the religion ~~of~~ of the Roman Empire in 342 CE, and therefore the government which controlled the Holy Land, Jerusalem, and the Holy places had been Christian.

Bozeman/Bruce
Roman Empire
See "Constantine and Christianity"
if Empire

The Arab conquest of Jerusalem under Caliph Omar in 638 CE faced the Christian world with the fact that its most sacred shrines were in the hands of "infidels." The Crusades were launched beginning in 1099 for ~~the~~ twin purposes: first, the liberation of Christian sanctuaries from the ruling "Moslem infidels and heathens;" and then, the reestablishment of Latin Christianity in Palestine, perceived in Christian imagination solely as "the Land of Christ."

That exclusive vision was expressed typically ^{by} one crusader, the Dominican Stephan of Bourbon who wrote: "We are the descendants of the Holy Land both according to the flesh and the spirit...here our mother the Church had its origin. Likewise the land is ours by the right of succession as far ~~as~~ as we are the true children of God." In Valmar Cramer's compendium, another crusader is quoted as saying:

"This land belongs to us by the right of purchase and acquisition, for Christ bought it for us by his blood, has expelled the Jewish people from it by the might of the Romans and has handed it to Christendom."

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Thus, the evidence is abundant that the Vatican's policies during this period - and for some time beyond - was dominated by what Dr. Walter Zander describes in his study, Israel and the Holy Places of Christendom (Praeger Publishers, 1971), as "a Catholic nostalgia for the Crusades" which looked forward to "the renewal of the splendours of the first century of the Crusades."

These theological and historical views undergirded the Holy See's support

see # Socher
of the Sykes-Picot Agreement ~~xxxg~~ signed by France and Britain in May 1916 which called for the internationalization of Palestine. During this period, the Vatican officially entrusted France - "the eldest daughter of the Church" - with the role of protector of Catholic interests in the Levant, and urged France to become the protector over the Holy Land. The issuance of the Balfour Declaration awarding the Palestine Mandate to Protestant Great Britain and the issuance of the Balfour Declaration in November 1917 marked the beginning of the end of the internationalization proposal. The Holy See had suffered its first major geo-political defeat in its struggle against Zionism.

II - 1917-1947 - The Holy See continued its advocacy of the internationalization proposal for Palestine and shifted its focus to two primary theses during this period: (a) the internationalization of the holy places under the control of "Christian countries," and (b) the prevention of "Jewish domination" over Palestine and the holy places.

G. Bruhn
29) After 1815 Congress of Vienna, temporary ascendancy of the four victorious powers - BRITAIN, AUSTRIA, RUSSIA, & FRANCE. With France eclipsed after Napoleonic wars, these four nations sought to dominate Europe in almost any form they could agree on as mutually acceptable. Equally significant in shaping any realistic settlement was the power supremacy of Great Britain, nowhere on globe was there a navy or an alliance of naval forces strong enough to defy British mastery of seas. Mechanization of industry & construction of continent by Austria, Russia, Prussia. Habsburg empire included Germans, Magyars, Poles, Czechs, Croats, Italians & several Slavic minorities. HRE empire dissolved in 1806 / new diplomatic conference 38 German states, diet at Frankfurt. Austria dictated to lesser German states, set tone of central European politics. 12) Prussia emerged as a major power, Berlin, & St. Petersburg (Nicholas I) all had discredited reputations for interference of Vienna, Berlin, & St. Petersburg (Russia emerged from revolutionary wars with new extensive conquests then any other continental power). 13) Prussia emerged as a major power, Berlin, & St. Petersburg (Russia emerged from revolutionary wars with new extensive conquests then any other continental power). 14) Outstanding vindication of legitimacy was return of Louis XVIII, Bourbons, to Paris (other major interlude of French Revolution). 15) 1822 - Canning (of Britain) welcomed return to more realistic diplomacy of every nation for (Toussaint) & God for the Balfour Declaration. 16) BRITISH power - decisive influence / BRIT MANDATE PRESSURE (Young Pasha) became dominant of US foreign policy because it was reinforced by might of British fleet.

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