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Series A: Writings and Addresses. 1947-1991

Box 5, Folder 40, Statement on Pope Paul VI - Golda Meir visit,
Undated.



STATEMENT BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL INTERRELIGIOUS
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR, AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, ON POPE PAUL-
GOLDA MEIR VISIT

In telephone conversations with high-ranking Catholic and Israeli sources in Rome last night which took place within 24 hours of the meeting between Pope Paul VI and Israeli Premier Golda Meir, *This comment was* ~~we were~~ informed that the meeting was held in a completely friendly, warm, and constructive spirit. The statement by Dr. Frederico Alessandrini was a fundamental misrepresentation and distortion of both the spirit of the meeting as well as of the issues and the understandings that were arrived at. To judge the actual importance of this historic meeting it is necessary to read the text of the official communique prepared by the Vatican Secretariat of State and the Israeli officials, and not to rely in any way on the verbal outburst of a press secretary. It is terribly unfortunate that Alessandrini's ~~propaganda~~ concession to Arab extremist views was allowed to dominate the world press' headlines leaving a negative impression of what was essentially an altogether positive experience. One has a right to expect higher standards of integrity from a spokesman who presumes to speak for the Holy See.

The facts are - based on reliable sources - that the discarded proposal for the internationalization of Jerusalem was in no way discussed or referred to. The facts are that the invitation for the

visit grew out of a common desire that was reached in cordial conversations between the Vatican Secretariat of State and the Israeli Ambassador to Italy; it was not contrived nor imposed by either side. Despite the polemical intention of Alessandrini to minimize the meeting, the facts are that Mrs. Meir was received with the same protocol and ceremonial correctness that was accorded to President Nixon on his last visit to Rome.

The world press has an obligation to make clear that the communique was the official expression of that meeting and not that verbal improvisation of a press secretary. The real spirit of mutual respect that characterized that unprecedented meeting is reflected in the fact that on welcoming Mrs. Meir to his office, Pope Paul VI blessed her personally, and blessed the State of Israel. The Pontiff then declared that he regarded the meeting between them as an historic event, and Mrs. Meir responded by saying that she agreed.

Following is the full text of the communique:

"This morning 15 Jan 1973 at 12:15 His Holiness Pope Paul VI received Mrs. Golda Meir Prime Minister of Israel who was accompanied by the Israeli Ambassador in Italy H.I. Mr. Amiel E. Najjar

"The conversation which lasted for about an hour covered the situation in the Middle East and the specific problems concerning the Holy Land

"His Holiness after having reviewed the history and the sufferences of the Jewish people presented the Holy See's point of view on the problems which have to a large extent

relevance to its humanitarian mission such as the refugee problem and the situation of the various communities which live in the Holy Land and those which are directly related to its more specifically religious mission regarding the Holy Places and the sacred and universal character of the city of Jerusalem

"The Prime Minister emphasized Israel's desire for peace and amply described the position of the possibilities in reaching a peaceful solution in the Middle Eastern conflict through negotiations between the parties and on the above mentioned subjects and also referred to the phenomenon of terrorism as well as to the special conditions concerning Jewish communities in certain parts of the world

"His Holiness finally in expressing his warmest wishes that justice and law would establish peace and coexistence among all peoples of the Middle East once again declared the intention of the Holy See to do all within its possibilities in order to reach these goals."

