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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (575 words)

FOR RELEASE  
JANUARY 5, 1990

# THE 1990s -- CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1989, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

In speculating on what the upcoming 1990s might hold for the Jewish people, Dorothy Baker's well-known bon mot comes to mind: "Jews are like everybody else, only more so!"

No serious reflection on Jewish interests in the 1990s can take place without locating them within the geopolitical forces of East-West and North-South relations.

The massive revolutions for democracy and in opposition to the ancient regimes of Communist tyranny will have fateful, and ambiguous, consequences not only for European Jewry, but for Jews everywhere, and especially for Israel.

Glasnost and perestroika will continue to result in massive emigration for Soviet Jewry, probably the dominant human issue for world Jewry in the 1990s. The challenges to financial and human resources for resettlement will be monumental and will call for unparalleled commitment and patience.

The provision of Jewish religious, cultural and educational support for the million-plus Jews who opt to remain in the Soviet Union will be a parallel commanding Jewish concern.

Glasnost has made possible unprecedented freedom of speech in the Soviet Union and in the East European countries, and certainly that human right is to be welcomed by Jews.

But now, right-wing, nationalist and bitterly anti-Semitic groups, foremost among them the Pamyat, are beginning to have a field day in spewing out their anti-Jewish bile. Echoes of that historic anti-Jewish bias now circulates in the cultural bloodstreams of Poland, Hungary, East Germany, Rumania and the other formerly Communist tyrannies.

Knowledgeable and skillful Jewish leadership will have their hands full counteracting both the anti-Semitic and anti-Israel biases which have surfaced on both sides of the collapsed Iron Curtain.

The Vatican, which has quietly emerged as a major architect in mobilizing the anti-Communist forces in Eastern Europe, could play a constructive role in countering the religion-based anti-Semitism -- that is, if Jews do not manage to alienate the Vatican completely by strident, reckless attacks on the Pope and the Catholic Church when a moderate, diplomatic strategy would prove to be far more effective in the Jewish interest.

World Jewry will also have to be vigilant over the potential negative impact of a reunification of East Germany with the Federal Republic of West Germany.

Four decades of the GDR's hostility toward Israel and its pro-PLO, pro-terrorist activity could become a serious negative influence on West Germany's positive attitudes toward Jews and Israel. Watch that closely in the 1990s.

The North-South coordinate's impact on Jews and Israel is nowhere more dramatically shown than in the current surrealistic drama in Panama.

While the Panamanian struggle was, in general, a conflict between U.S. and pro-democratic forces and Noriega's drug-sustained tyranny, when the looting started, Panamanian Jewish shopkeepers and business-people got the worst of it. Undoubtedly, Latin American Jewry will look increasingly to their North American co-religionists for appropriate aid, both political and economic.

As my mother of blessed memory used to say to describe a special Jewish pleasure; "A Jewish pleasure is a cool Yom Kippur." I worry with my fellow Jews, whether the 1990s with all its upheavals might not be a "cool Yom Kippur."

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*



JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (575 words)

FOR RELEASE  
JANUARY 12, 1990

ARCHBISHOP TUTU IS MORE ANTI-JEWISH THAN HE ACKNOWLEDGES

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

I first met Desmond Tutu, the Anglican archbishop of South Africa and Nobel laureate, in his church in October 1985. Helen Suzman, the feisty anti-apartheid leader in South Africa's parliament, arranged for an American Jewish Committee delegation to meet with Tutu for a frank discussion about apartheid and black-Jewish relations.

After the usual courtesies, the archbishop launched into a long lecture to us about how apartheid is the equivalent of the Nazi Holocaust, and the Jews are spectators to the black tragedy.

Suzman -- as did we all -- bristled with anger. She was the first member of the South African parliament to campaign against the evils of apartheid more than a quarter century before Tutu was on the scene. She also organized the first liberal party in South Africa to combat apartheid.

"Listen, Desmond," Suzman said, "I have devoted my entire life and career to battling against apartheid. Terrible and tragic as is apartheid, it is no way the equivalent of the Nazi Holocaust which tried to destroy physically the entire Jewish people. I wish you would stop exploiting that great Jewish tragedy for your purposes."

Tutu seemed to be embarrassed and remained silent for awhile.

But he obviously has not remained silent since then. He has consistently exploited Judaism and the Jewish historic experience. I am not sure whether he really believes what he has been saying about Jews and Judaism, or whether he is cynically distorting -- even raping -- Jewish sancta for his own dramatic purposes.

In 1984, in an address before the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, he asserted that apartheid owes its origins to the Holy Temple of the Jews in Jerusalem. The temple courtyard, which separated Gentiles from Jews, was the earliest form of apartheid, Tutu said. So what about the courtyards that separated priests from Levites, from Israelites, men from women? Did that make the Jews anti-Semitic?

Then, he freely spoke about the "arrogance of Jewish power" and "the Jewish lobby." Tutu seems to have memorized the Protocols of the Elders of Zion as well as he has the Bible.

Now, on his latest visit to Israel, he flamboyantly calls for the creation of a Palestinian state, and calls on the Jews to forgive the Nazis. Support unconditionally for a PLO-dominated state is another irresponsible monkey wrench tossed gratuitously into the delicate peace process that is painstakingly being put together.

And while affronting Jews for not forgiving the Nazis sounds very Christian, I have not yet heard Archbishop Tutu call on 23 million blacks in South Africa to forgive the racist Afrikaaners.

Indeed, this self-styled disciple of Martin Luther King and Mahatma Gandhi declared on Jan. 25, 1986, in New York, "I believe there are situations where one has to use force."

Examining the record of Archbishop Tutu's declarations over recent years, I have come to the conclusion that his mind-set is that of the medieval Christian tradition, which believed that Jews are morally exhausted and that Christianity has come to supersede Judaism as a "superior" form of religion. Thus, we see it is classic anti-Judaism which feeds his consistent pattern of anti-Jewish attitudes. Some Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

Jan. 2, 90

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--Rabbi Tanenbaum, international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee, is immediate past president of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (325 words)

FOR RELEASE  
JANUARY 19, 1990

**PANAMANIAN JEWRY NEEDS URGENT HELP**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

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**--NEW YORK**

Recent conversations with Jewish and Catholic friends in Panama persuade me that the American removal of General Manuel Noriega from power was without question a positive and necessary achievement. The tragedy is that so many lives, Panamanian and American, were lost in the struggle to unseat tyranny.

During my earlier visits to Panama and Central America, it was clear that Noriega was running a police state that dominated its citizens with fear and terror. It is not to Jewish credit that one of Noriega's key henchmen was an Israeli, Mike Harari, a former leader of the Mossad. (While all of us oppose "collective" Jewish guilt, none of us committed to Israel can evade the reality that Harari's prominence in the media as a Noriega aide did neither Israel or Jewry any good.)

Some 5,000 Jewish citizens of Panama, mostly concentrated in Panama City, have special cause to be relieved by Noriega's defeat. In recent days, Noriega's followers in the so-called "Dignity Battalions" rampaged with arms through the business districts, looting and destroying almost everything in sight.

A very high percentage of the destroyed stores were owned by Jewish businessmen. Panamanian Jewry has played a leading role in FEDECC, the federation of Central American Jewish communities. Their economic devastation cannot but have repercussions throughout the whole of Central American Jewry.

Clearly, the drug criminal Noriega made Panama's economy into a basket case for all Panamanians. American Jewish leaders two weeks ago wisely urged the White House to do everything possible to help rebuild that devastated country. That request will need to be followed up regularly to assure that Panama and its vital Jewish community received all necessary aid to rebuild its former thriving life.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**RAP AND ANTI-SEMITISM -- THE LATEST DEGENERACY**

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

The new album from the rap music group, Public Enemy, with its vicious anti-Semitic beat, should come as a surprise to no one. It is the latest form of degeneracy which this anarchic culture inevitably must produce.

What does come as a sickening surprise is that Jews should be involved in promoting and selling such a piece of anti-Semitic poison as "Welcome to the Terrordome." Tragically, there were a few Jews in Weimar Germany who also supported the early Nazi movement in order to protect their fortunes and their material assets. How self-destructive can one be?

The band's lead singer, Chuck Ridenhour, charmingly called Chuck D, is a disciple of Louis Farrakhan. His lyrics in this album are thoroughly stamped with Farrakhan's anti-Semitic venom:

*"Crucifixion ain't no fiction*

*So-called chosen, frozen*

*Apology made to whoever pleases*

*Still they got me, just like Jesus."*

Music critics assert that rap is a response to the frantic pace of commercial television. Whatever its source, to me it is another reflection of the dehumanization, the assault on humanness which is so prevalent in our society. It provides the musical backdrop for a culture exploding with crack and ice, crime and corruption, indifference to human suffering and sheer killing for kicks.

After the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BCE, the Roman Empire began to collapse. "All was rapine, avarice and expense," as one author described it. At its height, Rome functioned as the civilized capital of the then known world, because of "ancient character and men" who were "honest, governed themselves firmly, knew how to obey, and served the State."

This rap garbage feels like the decline that brought Rome to its knees. Jews have a stake in repulsing such moral sickness.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
PURIM COMMENTARY (475 words)**

**FOR RELEASE  
FEBRUARY 23, 1990**

**WILL THERE BE A 'PAMYAT PURIM' IN 1990?**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

In many countries across the globe, Jewish communities have often celebrated two Purims. The primary observance focused on the triumph of Esther, the Jewish queen of Persia (Iran), and her uncle, Mordecai, in foiling the plot of the evil minister Haman, who tried to exterminate all the Jews in the powerful and extended Persian Empire. The ruler at that time, 435-464 BCE, was the "superking," Ahasuerus (Xerxes).

The second Purim was a celebration of some act of deliverance from a local threat of violence or destruction. Scholars estimate that there may have been as many as 200 local Purims across the centuries. Thus, there was a Narbonne Purim in France, in 1236; a Cairo Purim, in 1524; an Algiers Purim in 1774, and so on.

The mounting number of reports about the rise and public expressions of crude anti-Semitism and threats of pogroms against Soviet Jews by such ultra-nationalist, right-wing groups as Pamyat, or "The Patriots," leads to concern about two things.

First, that the calls for "the evacuation" of as many Soviet Jews as possible while there is still time must be taken with utter seriousness; and second, whether such a great deliverance of Soviet Jews should not be commemorated by a "Pamyat Purim" in 1990. (Most of the other Purims acknowledged the source of the threat in their names, such as, "The Gunpowder Purim" in Vilna in 1804; "The Purim of the Poisoned Sword in Bulgaria in 1807" -- so why not "Pamyat Purim?")

The historic connection with the ancient Purim is located in the analogous paranoia and xenophobia of Haman and the ultra-nationalists of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European countries.

Haman gave King Ahasuerus this jingoistic advice: "There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in the provinces of thy kingdom and their laws are different from those of other people; therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer them.

"If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed." Thus, the inability of a rigid, authoritarian mind to live with difference became the justification for destroying difference.

Haman is long dead but his anti-Jewish ideology lives on in many dark corners, especially in the nations now experiencing turmoil.

The key message in the Purim observance for us today is the response of Mordecai and Esther to the early warning signals threatening the security of Persian Jewry.

Their total commitment and interventions on the highest levels resulted in the saving of the lives of the majority of Persian and other Jewish communities. Purim 1990 is a moment for American and world Jewry to do no less for Jews whose future grows dimmer in the Soviet empire.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY**  
**COMMENTARY (375 words)**

**FOR RELEASE**  
**FEBRUARY 2, 1991**

**JEWISH DOCTRINE OF PLURALISM CAN HELP EASE WORLD TENSIONS**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

Wherever one looks across the globe, innocent human beings are being massacred by religious, racial, ethnic and tribal conflicts.

In the Soviet Union, for example, Christian Armenians and Moslem Azerbaijanis are slaughtering each to her. All over the world, fighting between Christians and Moslems, and Moslems and Moslems is leading to the murder of thousands of people in Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, the Sudan, Ethiopia the Philippines. The toll of daily deaths from religious and ideological fanaticism is terrifying.

In virtually every case of such group killings, one finds that there is no religious or political doctrine or ideology of religious pluralism -- a conviction of respect for difference, of live and let live.

During my 30 years of work in interreligious affairs in many parts of the world, I have come to believe that Jews and Judaism have a fundamental contribution to make in providing a moral and religious conception for human unity in the midst of the diversity of peoples and nations.

In an essay I wrote in 1974 called "Judaism, Ecumenism and Pluralism" that appeared in a book, "Speaking of God Today" (Fortress Press), I traced the Jewish views of tolerance and pluralism beginning in the Bible and developed by great Rabbinic sages and Talmudists in almost every century. It is remarkable how advanced and positive that tradition is.

The core of that tradition was formulated by such prominent rabbis as Maimonides, Rabbi Menachem Hameiri, Rabbi Jacob Emden, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch. Their teaching was based on the Talmudic principle, formulated by Maimonides: "Whoever professes to obey the seven Noahide Laws and strives to keep them is classed with the righteous among the nations and has a share in the world to come."

The Seven Noahide Laws prohibit idolatry, sexual immorality, blasphemy, murder, theft, cruelty to animals, and the positive commandment of establishing courts of justice (Sanhedrin 56).

Jewish leaders would do well to sponsor conferences on the Jewish doctrines of pluralism as a serious means of helping the human community, including Israel, to avert further bloodshed and intolerance.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (450 words)

FOR RELEASE  
MARCH 2, 19

**NEW AUSCHWITZ CENTER IS SIGN OF NEW UNDERSTANDING**

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

On Feb. 19, leaders of the Polish Catholic episcopacy and of the Solidarity-led government in Poland began digging the ground on which the new Carmelite convent will be built during the coming months.

The convent will be the first structure to be constructed as part of the interreligious center for dialogue and study that was agreed upon by European Jewish leaders and four Catholic cardinals meeting in Geneva in February 1987.

In the face of the swirling controversy and understandable anger throughout much of the world Jewish community, it must be recorded as a matter of historic record that the present achievement is the result of five years of difficult but patient and tempered negotiations involving key European, American and Israeli Jewish leaders, the Polish Catholic hierarchy, and the new Polish government.

Central to moving this decisive issue forward to a constructive resolution were people of such stature as Sir Sigmund Sternberg of London, Theo Klein of Paris, Tullia Zevi of Rome and the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, headquartered in New York and Geneva. Certainly several of the responsible demonstrations by Belgian Jewish groups and WIZO helped dramatize Jewish concerns.

Those of us who were involved in week-to-week conversations with Polish authorities knew as long as eight months ago that all the elements were present then for the current action. It was a matter of money (in Poland, even the Church is poor and had to raise money from other Catholic sources), land title purchases, architects' plans and finding productive workers before the present move could be made.

"Shreiying gevalt" and threatening lawsuits, many of us believed, could only inhibit the present action, not advance it.

Last week, Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki said in London that he not only supported actively the decision to move the Auschwitz convent to a new site, but made two other commitments:

First, he said that diplomatic relations between Poland and Israel would be resumed shortly. Second, he has set up an international commission of Poles and world Jewry to redesign the museum at Auschwitz, "to do justice to the tragedy of the Jewish people" and the other victims.

If all parties manage to behave in a serious, responsible manner during the coming months -- and not seize on Auschwitz as an occasion for personal and/or institutional publicity -- we may finally be able to honor and do justice to the memory of the 6 million Jewish martyrs whose tragedy has been denied or distorted in Poland for more than 40 years.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and immediate past president of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY**  
**COMMENTARY (425 words)**

**FOR RELEASE**  
**MARCH 16, 1990**

**CATHOLICS BEGIN FACING FULL TRUTH OF VATICAN AND NAZIS**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

In the late 1970s, I served as a script consultant to NBC-TV in its preparation of the miniseries, "Holocaust." In connection with that important program, a survey was conducted of high-school students across the country, who were asked to comment on what they thought the Nazi Holocaust was about.

"I think it is a Jewish holiday," one student in Seattle replied.

To the overwhelming majority of the Jewish people, the Holocaust is buried into our consciousness as the most traumatic event since the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in the first century. Many of us seem to believe that most Christians should know what anguishes Jews about the Holocaust.

As the Seattle high school surveys and many other studies document, Christian knowledge in America about the brutalities of the Nazis against the Jews is a mile wide and an inch thin.

It is for that reason that I believe the Los Angeles joint document of priests and rabbis is an important development. It is intended primarily for Catholics in the pews, and it contains basic information about the Nazis' systematic campaign to exterminate the Jewish people that most Christians would not receive in this concise form from any other source.

If it is understood as the beginning of a process of education of the Catholic people, and not as a finished product, then it should be welcomed by Jews everywhere.

While individual Catholic scholars have written courageously about the world of the Vatican and Pope Pius XII maintaining "impartiality" during the Nazis' rise to power, this is the first time to my knowledge that a group of Catholic clergy have faced the issue foursquare.

They joined their rabbinic colleagues in declaring that "in 1933, a Concordat was signed between the Vatican and Nazi Germany . . . The road was paved for a totalitarian one-party state. We are now free to ask whether the compromises made by the Vatican with the Nazis did not, in the long run, do more harm than good."

During our forthcoming meetings with the Vatican in the fall, we trust that this spirit of candor and search for truth will finally put an end to the polemical way in which this central issue has been avoided in the past.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

FOR RELEASE

COMMENTARY (325 words)

APRIL 6, 1990

**ISLAMIC FANATICS THREATEN SOVIET JEWS AND ALL AIR TRAVEL****By Marc H. Tanenbaum****(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)****--NEW YORK**

Suppose a group of Italian or Irish immigrants wanted to come to the United States, mainly for repatriation with their families. And suppose a group of American extremists declared they would not let them into this country because the United States belonged to them.

And further, suppose the American extremist said that if the Italian or Irish immigrants embarked for America, they would explode Alitalia or Aer Lingus airlines.

How do you think American Italians and Irish peoples would feel about those threats? Pretty much the same way, I think, that most of the Jewish people feel about the latest threats Islamic fanatics have made about blowing up East European airlines carrying Soviet Jews to Israel.

The Soviet Jews are now caught in a terrible double bind. If they remain in the Soviet Union, the right-wing nationalists such as Pamyat threaten many of them with anti-Semitic pogroms. Should they emigrate to Israel, Islamic extremists threaten to destroy the Soviet and other East European planes.

Neither the Soviet Union nor the United States -- nor any country for that matter -- can afford to capitulate to these thugs. For if they do, secure international air transportation will become hostage to this latest form of piracy, and no one anywhere will be secure.

The one bright spot in this dismal scene took place last week, when Poland's Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, speaking at an impressive American Jewish Congress dinner in New York, said that this country is prepared to play a role in helping Soviet Jews emigrate.

Ironically, if he acts on his words, it may be a Polish leader who will give backbone to the superpowers not to knuckle under to these Islamic terrorists.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY**  
**COMMENTARY (350 words)**

**FOR RELEASE**  
**MAY 18, 1990**

**THE DAY MADISON SQUARE GARDEN BECAME A GIANT YESHIVA**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

One observer said that he imagined for the first time what it felt like standing at the foot of Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments. Another said that is what it must have been like when thousands of Israelite pilgrims thronged the Holy Temple in Jerusalem for the three pilgrimage festivals.

They were trying to describe the experience of April 26, when some 20,000 traditional Jews assembled reverently in Madison Square Garden in New York. Under the inspiration of the Agudath Israel Organization, this mammoth group came together to celebrate the completion of the ninth cycle of daily study of the Talmud, the Daf Yomi Siyum Hashas.

The political manipulations of some of the leaders of the Agudath Israel and other Orthodox parties in Israel hardly attracts me as one of their admirers. But their otherwise deep commitment and advocacy of study of Torah and performance of mitzvot is admirable.

A special poignancy emerged from this extraordinary assembly of black-garbed men and modestly dressed women when they dedicated this event of prayer and religious study to the memory of the 6 million Jews murdered in the Nazi Holocaust.

From the 16th century until World War II, Eastern European, and especially Polish Jewry, were the chief world center of Judaism. Talmudic learning, with its unique capacity to guide the Jewish way of life and to train the mind sharply, was the national pastime of those Jewish communities.

Pilpul tournaments ("pilpul" meaning literally "pepper" for the spicy Talmudic dialectic) were held regularly in Polish fairs, markets, and poetical meetings -- a far cry from the hockey games, basketball games and circuses normally found at Madison Square Garden.

Adolf Hitler and his Nazis attempted to destroy that remarkable spiritual treasure. The sounds of Torah learning filling the bleachers of Madison Square Garden demonstrated that ultimately Hitler has failed, and the religious spirit of Judaism has prevailed.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY****COMMENTARY (400 words)****FOR RELEASE****JUNE 15, 1990****NELSON MANDELA'S VISIT POSES DILEMMA FOR U.S. JEWRY****By Marc H. Tanenbaum****(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)****--NEW YORK**

The forthcoming visit of Nelson Mandela to the United States poses a sharp moral and political dilemma for American Jews.

When the anti-apartheid leader comes to New York from June 20 to 23, he will receive a hero's welcome complete with ticker-tape parade headed by Mayor David Dinkins, a Yankee Stadium platform and a full-court ecumenical service at the prominent Riverside Church.

As one Jewish spokesman said, "Nelson Mandela is seen as a savior of black people in the anti-apartheid struggle, and will be hailed as a modern messiah." Mandela's years of sacrifice in South Africa's prisons have cast him in the symbol of a Christlike figure who suffered for the redemption of his African people.

To many Jews in South Africa as well as in the United States, there are feelings of deep appreciation of his heroic role in struggling against the injustices of apartheid. His recent embracing of Yasir Arafat and his one-sided criticisms of Israel, however, have raised serious doubts about Mandela's trustworthiness and fairness in his relations to the Jewish people.

The quandary for Jews is that Mandela will be lionized by virtually every segment of American society, and all the mass media will have a field day in treating his visit here as a kind of second coming.

If Jews become assertive in their public criticisms -- not to mention unrestricted displays by extremist elements who will play their demagogic and strident theater -- they will end up appearing, together with some few fundamentalist Christians, as the only enemies of Mandela, and ipso facto, supporters of apartheid.

If U.S. Jewry remains completely silent for prudential reasons, that could be seriously misunderstood as passive acceptance of Mandela's ties to the PLO and Arafat.

Efforts are being made to reach Mandela and make a clarifying statement that could remove some of the heat from the present dilemma. If that does not happen, we will be walking a tightrope during the coming weeks. The issue will be balancing the concern of domestic black-Jewish relations against the long-range concern of modifying the African National Congress' and Mandela's Third World anti-Western ideology, while at the same time remaining committed against the evils of apartheid.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**ELECTORAL REFORM IN ISRAEL  
IS AMERICAN JEWISH CONCERN, TOO**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

The process that led to the formation of the most right-wing, Likud-led government since the establishment of the State of Israel has dramatically demonstrated how unwieldy the democratic process has become in the Jewish state.

The horse-trading and deal-making with minuscule nationalist and religious parties show how out of proportion these parties' powers have become in the procedure of selecting an Israeli government.

So concerned have major American Jewish leaders become over this that last week they issued a joint statement, calling for basic revision of the electoral process.

The signators included three former presidents of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, heads of major Jewish organizations, prominent business people, lawyers, politicians, literary figures and rabbis from the three branches of Judaism, all deeply committed to Israel's well-being.

Asserting the group's support for the growing electoral reform movement in Israel, the statement said: "A parliament, elected by proportional representation through a party list system, with only a one percent threshold for party participation, will necessarily be fractionalized.

"Recent experience has demonstrated that the major parties in such a system, when attempting to form a government, become hostage the demands of smaller, narrow issue parties, and if the major parties join together in a government of 'national unity,' that government is paralyzed on serious matters in which they differ."

Pointing out that "all polls show that the Israeli electorate overwhelmingly supports reform," the signators to the statement called on Israel's political leaders, of all parties, to promptly create a new electoral system, "consistent with democratic values, that will provide for effective government."

As one of those signators, I received a letter this week from Dr. Arye Carmon, president of the Israel-Diaspora Institute, which coordinated the statement-signing project. He said that when the statement was presented to President Chaim Herzog, he spoke of "his deep anxiety about current developments."

"In these days, in which Israel's isolation is increasing, the challenges engendered by the huge influx of Soviet Jewish immigration and renewed threats from the Arab World, a stalemated government is clearly a disaster for the future of our society.

"We believe that electoral reform is the key to remedy the current system's ills, both in terms of accountability and governability."

Electoral reform is clearly an internal political matter for Israel's citizenry. But the consequences of continued electoral stagnation seriously affect not only Israel's relations with foreign governments, particularly the United States, but Jewish communities throughout the Diaspora.

For reasons of both domestic and foreign affairs, Israeli leaders of all political parties would do well not to ignore the heartfelt sentiments of the American Jewish leadership.

*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee*



JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

COMMENTARY (425 words)

FOR RELEASE

JUNE 29, 1990

## JEWISH AND CATHOLIC STATEMENT ON MORAL VALUES AN IMPORTANT ACT

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.).

--NEW YORK

The joint declaration by Jewish and Catholic religious leaders calling for systematic cultivation of moral values in our nation's secular school system is a potentially important development.

Drafted by committees of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the Synagogue Council of America, the declaration addresses the almost universal anxieties in American society over the rise in drug addiction, crime, depression, alcoholism, promiscuity, AIDS and teen pregnancies.

The joint statement attributes these social dysfunctions to the collapse of fundamental values among our children -- "like honesty, integrity, tolerance, and belief in human worth and dignity." It then proposes a series of steps for arresting this moral decline, and for nurturing core values among our children and youth through our schools.

Thanks to the invitations of Rabbi Joel Zaiman, SCA president, and Rabbi Jack Bemporad, SCA interreligious affairs chairman, I took part briefly in discussions which led to the adoption of this statement. Therefore, I am strongly supportive of its intentions and purposes.

But there are two comments, I think, that are in order:

First, as far back as the 1960s, the National Religious Education Association had prepared a series of extensive moral education projects, both for secular and religious school curricula. Much of the material was pedagogically excellent, and deserves to be examined in light of present changed circumstances.

The lesson to be learned from that experience is that while great investment was made in preparation of materials, much less vigor was devoted to implementation, that is, to getting the curricula and textbooks used in the school systems. That should not happen this time around.

Second, for this project to be taken seriously, there is a pressing need for the most thorough social, psychological, cultural and moral analysis of the American condition today. Unless you have a reliable diagnosis of the causes of the illness or disease, you are not likely to produce a meaningful prognosis.

The leadership on both the Jewish and Catholic sides, I can testify, is of such high quality of intelligence, wisdom and commitment, that I think all of us can be confident that they will work to make this project a serious and lasting contribution to the moral healing of America.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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NELSON MANDELA -- CHARISMATIC AND CONTRADICTIONARY

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

The dramatic visit of Nelson Mandela to the United States has been nothing short of a triumph of personality over political ideology.

Mandela is a natural aristocrat, with genuine charismatic power. His gifts of persuasive communication lifted up the justice of the anti-apartheid struggle to new levels of awareness and commitment for all of us. And that is a great and positive good.

But, I regret to say, his charisma does not resolve some basic and troubling contradictions in his political ideology. Thus, Mandela's consistent support of Colonel Moammar Gadhafi, Fidel Castro and the Palestine Liberation Organization's Yasir Arafat is morally distressing, to most Americans, I believe, as to Jews.

The overwhelming support of the anti-apartheid campaign rests on its clear-cut and unambiguous moral foundations -- the establishment of human rights and assurance of civil and political liberties: Gadhafi, Castro and the PLO in their extensive support of international terrorists are among the worst violators of human rights in the world today. It would be an historic tragedy if the compelling struggle to dismantle the evil apartheid system became compromised by continued association with these terrorist factories.

When asked repeatedly about those radical connections, Mandela misleadingly said that he would not interfere in the internal affairs of those countries, nor of any other country. But without batting an eyelash, he preceded to thrust himself into the internal affairs of Israel by proposing what her borders should be, and supporting the PLO version of the peace process.

While declaring his friendship for the Jewish people, Mandela warmly acknowledged during his meeting in New York with religious leaders the support of Christian and Muslim leaders in the anti-apartheid struggle. Not a mention of Jewish support.

Mandela and the African National Congress appear to be changing their views on a Marxist economy for South Africa. Perhaps that new flexibility and realism may yet lead in time to a change in positions on Israel and the Middle East realities as well.

In any case, Nelson Mandela is clearly a major international personality and Jews would be wise to continue to cultivate his understanding.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY**  
**COMMENTARY (375 words)**

**FOR RELEASE**  
**JULY 13, 1990**

**WOLFE KELMAN -- THE RABBIS' RABBI**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

"He was a powerful person. His power was that of love. And his power was never exercised at the expense of another human being."

Those were the words of Rabbi Levi Kelman of Jerusalem as he paid loving tribute to his remarkable father, Rabbi Wolfe Kelman.

Wolfe, who was my classmate at the Jewish Theological Seminary and one of my oldest and closest friends, died June 26 after a long struggle with cancer.

During his 40 years as executive head of the Rabbinical Assembly, the Conservative rabbinic association, he literally helped change the course of Jewish and general history through his wisdom and statesmanship.

Wolfe Kelman was beloved virtually everywhere as the "rabbis' rabbi." He was pivotal in transforming the Conservative rabbinate into a large, model professional group that empowered the spiritual life and the physical security of rabbis. One of his proudest efforts led to the ordination of women rabbis by the seminary in 1985.

Rabbi Kelman worked vigorously to promote solidarity with the Orthodox and Reform movements, and to advance mutual respect between all religions and races.

In the early 1960s, Wolfe and I became bonded together in collaborating with our teacher, the late Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, during the civil rights activities led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and in advancing Jewish interests at Vatican Council II in 1962-65.

Out of his rich Hasidic background in Poland and then Toronto, he lived a life of learning and deep caring for Jews and other human beings all over the world. He was profoundly concerned about improving American Jewish-Israeli relations, and made a strong personal impact on advancing religious pluralism in the Jewish State.

With all that extensive and often hectic activity, he was a devoted husband to his loving partner, Jackie, and a caring father to his children, Levi, Naamah and Abby, his six grandchildren, and to his brothers and sisters.

His daughter, Naamah, spoke for all of us who were blessed to know Wolfe Kelman when she said in her eulogy, "My heart is broken and yet so full. This is a paradox my father would understand."

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

FOR RELEASE

COMMENTARY (400 words)

JULY 27, 1990

**RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GREEK ORTHODOX AND JEWISH COMMUNITIES**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

--NEW YORK

The current visit to the United States of the Ecumenical Patriarch, Dimitrios I of Constantinople, is quite rightly an event of major religious importance to Eastern Orthodox Christians, about 6 million of whom live in this century.

Symbolically, it is also an occasion for acknowledging the general growth in positive relationships over recent decades between the Greek Orthodox and Jewish communities in North America.

In January 1972, I had the privilege of co-chairing with His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, the charismatic primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Western hemisphere, the first national conference of Greek Orthodox and Jewish scholars and leaders. It was a remarkable experience, probing deeply the historical interaction of Byzantine Christianity and Judaism.

The proceedings of that unprecedented interchange were published in the Greek Orthodox Theological Review (Volume XXII, Spring 1977), which shed new light on the role of the Jews in the Byzantine Empire and examined contemporary problems of anti-Semitism in the Eastern Orthodox world.

After years of evasion by the late Papandreou government, the recently elected Greek government moved quickly to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. It is not generally known that the American Greek Orthodox community played a crucial role in influencing Athens to make this decisive move, despite much opposition from the Arab Orthodox world.

Archbishop Iakovos, who has a deep appreciation of the Jewish foundations of Christianity, was among the first major Christian leaders to repudiate the infamous U.N. resolution libelling Zionism as racism. Greek Orthodox leaders in the United States, both clerical and lay, have also quietly sought to counter some of the lingering theological and liturgical anti-Jewish attitudes which still pervade Greece.

Of the 250 million Eastern Orthodox Christians, the majority reside in the Soviet Union, the Balkan nations, the Middle East, and North and South America. Given the massive anti-Jewish attitudes among Christians in the Middle East, and the rising anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe with its large Orthodox Christian populations, positive Eastern Orthodox and Jewish solidarity could become a constructive countervailing force. The visit of Patriarch Dimitrios might well become a stimulus for enlarging that circle of understanding and mutual respect.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (600 words)

FOR RELEASE  
JUNE 8, 1990

VATICAN COUNCIL II -- 25 YEARS LATER  
By Marc H. Tanenbaum  
(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

In the coming weeks and months, a spate of conferences and institutes will be held in many parts of the United States, Europe, Latin America and Israel to mark the 25th anniversary of the adoption of *Nostra Aetate*, the Vatican Declaration dealing with Catholic-Jewish relations.

That historic declaration, adopted overwhelmingly on Oct. 28, 1965, by 2,500 Catholic leaders from throughout the world at Vatican Council II, transformed Catholic-Jewish relations.

Cynics and extremists who oppose involvement in Catholic-Jewish relations point only to current problems and avoid or deny the progress that has been made. Despite its limitations, *Nostra Aetate* has resulted in major changes in Catholic attitudes towards Jews and Judaism, and even toward Israel.

In contrast to the Baltimore Catechism of 1937, which was virtually a manual in teaching anti-Semitism, the majority of Catholic textbooks used in parochial schools today are free of any anti-Jewish references.

Similar improvements have taken place in Catholic liturgy, sermons, mass media, Catholic teaching in seminaries, colleges and universities. Don't take my word for it; the evidence is available for any fair-minded person to see and judge.

Critics will resist believing this, but we have also seen the beginning of meaningful changes in Vatican and Catholic attitudes toward Israel and Jerusalem.

At a conference in which I took part four years ago between the Vatican and International Jewish delegations, the Vatican's officials wrote into our joint communique, "There exist no theological objections to the existence of the sovereign state of Israel; only unresolved political problems stand in the way of full normalization of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Israel."

Earlier this year, the American Catholic hierarchy adopted a statement on the Middle East in which they did not question the right to Israel's sovereignty over a unified Jerusalem, but focused their concerns on assurance to free access to all holy places.

When I was in Rome as a delegate observer to Vatican Council II, there was a "conspiracy." It was a powerful conspiracy between a number of ultra-conservative Catholic bishops -- several of them explicitly anti-Semitic -- who joined forces with Arab prelates and Egypt's President Gamal Abdel Nasser, who tried to defeat *Nostra Aetate*.

They believed that any Vatican declaration that condemned anti-Semitism and said positive things about Jews and Judaism would be either a reversal of Catholic theology or a political victory for Israel.

A monumental struggle was carried out by friendly Catholic cardinals and their Jewish allies, and the pro-Jewish forces finally prevailed. The late Cardinal Augustin Bea, Vatican Secretariat president, Cardinal Lawrence Shehan of Baltimore, the entire American Catholic hierarchy and numerous European and Latin American bishops were the moral heroes in that just cause.

This 25th anniversary year is an important time to take stock of the progress made and the major work still to be done.

Above all, it is a time to acknowledge that without the commitment, dedication and very trying work of both Catholic and Jewish leaders in Rome from 1962 to 1965, there would have been no *Nostra Aetate*, and probably very little to celebrate in Catholic-Jewish relations today and tomorrow.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*



**SHOULD HOMOSEXUALS BE ORDAINED AS RABBIS?**

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

Should gay and lesbian Jews be ordained as rabbis and allowed to serve Jewish congregations?

That controversial issue received widely differing responses in the Jewish community in recent weeks, and promises to become a subject of widespread soul-searching among American and Israeli Jews in the months ahead.

After four years of intensive study, the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the rabbinic arm of Reform Judaism, voted unanimously to welcome homosexuals into the Reform rabbinate.

In a delicately balanced statement -- which deserves to be read in full -- the CCAR resolution affirmed "heterosexual, monogamous, procreative marriage (as) the ideal human relationship (in Jewish tradition) for the perpetuation of species, covenantal fulfillment and the preservation of the Jewish people."

At the same time, the Reform rabbis acknowledged the reality of homosexuality among some of its members and sought to accord them full religious equality, including in the rabbinate.

Orthodox Jewish leaders vigorously opposed the Reform decision. The traditional view is based on the firm belief that the Torah and Jewish law strictly prohibit homosexual activity.

The Rabbinical Assembly, the rabbinic arm of Conservative Judaism and of which I am a member, adopted a sensitive if brief resolution last May. It welcomed gays and lesbians as full members in Conservative synagogues, deplored violence and prejudice against them and urged their complete civic equality, as did the CCAR.

While the biblical teaching in Leviticus 18:22 condemns homosexuality as "an abomination," my sense is that the oncoming debate will center far more on sociological than on theological grounds.

The preservation of the Jewish family -- which means the reproduction of Jewish children -- has been the foundation stone of Jewish continuity and survival across four millennia.

Gay and lesbian "marriages" -- with some few exceptions of child adoptions or child-bearing through artificial insemination -- becomes the equivalent to Jews of Catholic celibacy, "the end of the line."

For centuries, rabbis have been upheld in Jewish communities across the world as role models of these Jewish family values. Not only were they expected to teach the biblical mandates of "be fruitful and multiply," but their family life normally became a model for how other faithful Jews should construct their homes.

Reinforcing current Jewish anxieties about the homosexual rabbinate issue is the fact that American Jews have the lowest birth rate of any religious or ethnic group in this country.

I believe that the fear that homosexual rabbis threaten Jewish continuity and survival -- rather than sheer homophobia -- is the primary force underlying the strong negative reaction of some Jewish groups to their ordination.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (625 words)

FOR RELEASE  
NOVEMBER 16, 1990

CARDINAL WILLEBRANDS -- A TZADIK IN THE VATICAN

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

Two major Jewish groups -- the Synagogue Council of America and the American Jewish Committee -- recently honored Cardinal Jan Willebrands, president emeritus of the Vatican Secretariat on Religious Relations with the Jews. The tributes were richly deserved.

I first met Cardinal Willebrands when he was a monsignor in the Vatican in the 1960s. He was the closest aide and confidant of the late Cardinal Augustin Bea, the first president of the Vatican Secretariat, who was charged by Pope John XXIII -- "the best Pope the Jews ever had" -- to draft the text of "Nostra Aetate."

That historic declaration, which for the first time in Catholic history condemned anti-Semitism, repudiated the "Christ-killer" canard and called for "fraternal dialogue and mutual respect between Catholics and Jews," literally transformed the course of Catholic-Jewish relations all over the world, especially in the United States.

Cardinal Bea was the architect and guiding genius in nurturing Nostra Aetate into reality, in the face of bitter opposition from traditionalist bishops, Arab prelates and Muslim governments.

Willebrands, already showing signs of statesmanship and discretion, was secretly sent during Vatican Council II to Arab countries in order to counter their opposition of the declaration.

Willebrands succeeded Cardinal Bea as president, and became the master builder of Catholic-Jewish relations around the world during the past 25 years. The cardinal's deep bonds with the Jewish people began during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands, where he helped save and gave comfort to many Jews.

Under his leadership, the Vatican issued a comprehensive set of guidelines that gave instruction for translating the spirit of Nostra Aetate into concrete changes in textbooks, Bible teaching, liturgy, sermons and Catholic media.

Throughout the past 25 years, as we all know, there were many ups and down in Vatican-Jewish relations -- diplomatic relations with Israel, anti-Semitism in predominantly Catholic countries, the Waldheim audiences, the Arafat meetings, the Auschwitz convent.

However emotionally laden and tense the issue, Jewish leaders knew that they could turn at any time to Cardinal Willebrands and get a fair and sympathetic hearing. Without any publicity or fanfare, he made continuous interventions for Jews and Israel with the Pope, the Vatican secretariat of state, and other curia bodies.

Even though he did not succeed in a number of situations, he was listened to seriously because in 1978, his stature was such that he was considered "papabile," a leading candidate for the papacy.

Jewish tradition asserts that "the righteous of the nations of the earth are assured a place in the world to come." Cardinal Willebrands is such a tzadik, and his immortality resides in the historic monuments of new trust and confidence between Catholics and Jews to which he continues to devote his life.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, former international relations consultant to the American Jewish Committee, is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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VATICAN-JEWISH RELATIONS 25 YEARS LATER

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

How do you measure 25 years of a relationship between the Vatican, the Catholic Church and the Jewish people?

I thought hard about that question on Dec. 5 and 6, as I sat at meetings in Rome with the Vatican Secretariat on Religious Relations with the Jews and then at the concluding assembly with Pope John Paul II.

My first associations went back to my childhood in Baltimore. On a Sabbath afternoon, I recall vividly to this day the story my father told me of how a Russian Orthodox priest in the Ukraine mounted a pogrom against my father's house on Good Friday one year.

The priest, leading an enraged mob, seized my uncle, Aaron, from the house and caused him to drown before the entire Jewish village. "God-forsaken Jew," the priest cried out, "we offer you as ransom for the murder of Christ by the Jews."

Throughout my childhood, I was convinced that the central belief of Christians was that Jews were a Christ-killing people. I was equally convinced that Christians were a homicidal people who killed Jews.

Standing in Vatican Council II in October 1965, I struggled with a mixture of relief and disbelief as I watched the Vatican Council adopt almost unanimously "Nostra Aetate," which repudiated the Christ-killer charge forever, and rejected every form of anti-Semitism, past, present or future.

My historical fantasy was that had that declaration, and the later Vatican Guidelines and Notes on Teaching About Jews and Judaism been adopted and implemented 500 years earlier, my uncle Aaron would probably be alive today.

I am also convinced that had this new culture of Catholic respect for Jews and Judaism been established in the Christian West centuries earlier, there is a genuine likelihood that most of the 6 million martyred Jews murdered by the Nazis might well have been alive today.

That is how fateful I believe the revolutionary development in Catholic-Jewish relations over the past 25 years has become.

From my own direct experience in interreligious relations over the past quarter-century, I can testify that not a single Catholic textbook today used in the United States, parts of Western Europe and in South America contain any anti-Semitic references.

Compare that with the 1937 Baltimore catechism, which was literally a textbook in teaching religious anti-Semitism to a whole generation of Catholic parochial students in this country. That catechism has been revoked and does not exist anymore.

The other measure of the historic impact of Nostra Aetate is to be found in the extraordinary network of Catholic-Jewish dialogue groups in literally every major city in the United States, much of Western Europe, Latin America, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Having helped establish many of these groups over a period of 10 years of intensive travel after Vatican Council II, I can testify how these face-to-face relationships have begun to transform personal attitudes between tens of thousands of Catholics and Jews.

You can go to any of these network groups and find Catholics and Jews who participate in the dialogue relating to each other as friends and neighbors, and not alienated by the ancient hostile stereotypes and suspicions. No small achievement in 25 years!

Sitting in Rome earlier this month, it was reassuring to hear one cardinal and bishop after

(more)

another declare that whatever the outstanding problems are between Catholics and Jews, the movement of mutual respect and solidarity is "irreversible."

And then on Thursday, Dec. 6, in the presence of some 60 Catholic and Jewish leaders from many parts of the world, Pope John Paul II reiterated his oft-stated conviction that God's covenant with the Jewish people is permanent.

He then added that no dialogue between Catholics and Jews should take place without reflecting on the horrors of the Nazi Shoah against the Jews, and the anti-Semitism which made it possible.

The weakest link in his pronouncement was his vague, mystical reference to the holiness of Jerusalem and the Holy Land to Jews, Christians and Moslems. Some Jews were disappointed by that refrain, but my realism tells me that only the Government of Israel has the authority to negotiate full diplomatic relations with the Vatican, and will do so in its own good time.

Some Jewish skepticism or cynicism emerged since this 25th observance in Vatican City. What is the value of these pronouncements by Vatican authorities and the pope about anti-Semitism, and respect for Jews and Judaism? It has been said already; there is nothing new.

There are nearly a billion Catholics scattered around the world. Except for the United States, parts of Western Europe and clerical leaders in parts of South America, the majority of the world's Catholics do not know that there is such a document as *Nostra Aetate*, and are ignorant about the Church's fundamentally changed doctrines toward Jews and Judaism.

At the meeting with the pope, a Polish bishop, Henryk Muszynski, presented to John Paul II the first volume of a Polish translation of *Nostra Aetate*, other basic Vatican documents and most of the pope's positive speeches on respect for Jews and Judaism. It has taken 25 years for these critical Vatican Council documents even to become known to Polish Catholics.

Similar ignorance of these historic changes are common in much of Eastern Europe, where anti-Semitism flourishes, and in large parts of South America, Africa and Asia.

The repetition of these statements by the pope and other respected Vatican authorities are not a luxury. They are a necessity if we are ever to uproot the sources of this social pathology of demonizing Jews and Israel.

I do not expect to be around for the 50th anniversary of *Nostra Aetate*, but on a personal note, let me just say that I feel privileged and deeply gratified to have been part of this historic movement, which has literally transformed the course of the 1,900 years of Catholic-Jewish relations.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is the former international relations director to the American Jewish Committee, and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.*

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**JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY**  
**COMMENTARY (350 words)**

**FOR RELEASE**  
**DECEMBER 14, 1990**

**THE VATICAN AND JEWISH UNITY**

**By Marc H. Tanenbaum**

**(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)**

**--NEW YORK**

By the time this column appears, there will already have been news reports of the meetings held Dec. 5 and 6 among Pope John Paul II, Vatican authorities, and world Jewish representatives. I hope to report on those exchanges in my next columns.

In our preparations at the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations for these Vatican meetings, it is clear that there is a universal Jewish consensus on the basic issues that need to be discussed regularly with the Vatican.

Foremost among those questions are Vatican-Israel diplomatic relations; the rise of anti-Semitism, especially in Eastern Europe; the Persian Gulf crisis and the security of Israel; the free emigration of Soviet and Ethiopian Jewries; opposition to terrorism; and upholding human rights.

These are obviously fundamental issues of Jewish security and well-being. They deserve the wisest, most informed and most statesmanlike handling by Jewish leaders.

Jewish causes at this moment are not well served by internal Jewish rivalries and struggles for personal or institutional publicity. That is not to say that differing ideological or religious approaches should be suppressed. Nor need there be a repression of differing methods of negotiation, namely, conciliatory versus confrontational. There is a time and place for both.

But in recent months, I regret to say, there has been far too much recrimination, personal and institutional hostility, that undermines Jewish solidarity and effectiveness.

As we see in the Persian Gulf crisis, Israel and world Jewry have more than enough real enemies in the world. "Sinat chinam," causeless hatred, and uncivil competition only plays into the hands of our worst foes.

The surest antidote to the hostility and external threat to Jews is the strengthening of mutual respect between Jews, and maximum feasible cooperation. Hopefully, the Vatican-Jewish meetings will be an occasion for reasserting that Jewish chochmah (wisdom).

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum is the former international relations director to the American Jewish Committee and is immediate past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (750 words)

FOR RELEASE  
DECEMBER 28, 1990

1990 -- FOR JEWS, THE WORST AND SOMEWHAT BEST OF YEARS

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1990, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

What kind of year was 1990 for the Jewish people?

To cite a commentary on the Passover Haggadah, "We begin with anguish (over the slavery in Egypt) and we conclude with joy (over the liberation from exile through the Exodus.)"

Jews had multiple reasons for anguish in 1990. Israel, at the center of Jewish consciousness, was battered and threatened incessantly by its violence-prone Palestinian and Arab neighbors.

Saddam Hussein's brutal aggression against Kuwait, and his massive military machine with its weapons of potential mass destruction, transformed Israel's bad neighborhood into a scene of apocalyptic threat. The intifada of the Palestinians, fueled by the rage over the Temple Mount conflict, increased the street stabbings of ordinary Israelis.

Hovering over all this turmoil and uncertainty, the organization by President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker of an international consortium to drive Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait became a *raison d'etat* -- or in fact, a pretext -- for the U.S. to support a series of troublesome anti-Israel resolutions at the United Nations.

The intention of the new abrasive pressures against Israel was explained as an effort to keep the Western-Arab military coalition in the Persian Gulf intact.

But to concerned Israelis and Jews, it suggested the beginning of a reordering of America's alliances and priorities in the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia, the Gulf states, Egypt and even Syria as anchors of U.S. foreign policy there, leaving Israel on the back burner.

The result is that in 1991 and beyond, the heart of Israel's security and interests in the United States may lie in Congress.

Ironically, and in some ways tragically, the preoccupation with the Persian Gulf crisis tended to minimize if not obscure one of the great historic developments of our lifetime -- namely, the large migration of Soviet Jews to Israel.

That stunning development holds the possibility of transforming Israel's internal political and cultural life, and could help bolster Israel's capacity to defend herself from external enemies.

Despite the overwhelming preoccupation with the Persian Gulf crisis, American and other Jewish communities -- especially Israeli Jewry -- merit much tribute for their intensified support of Soviet Jewry through Operation Exodus. The absorption and resettlement of Soviet and Ethiopian Jewry should clearly become a predominant priority for world Jewry during the coming decade, despite all the diverting external problems.

On the international scene, several other developments require much examination but can be only listed here:

- \* The reunification of Germany raised widespread anxieties in world Jewry, but it was balanced by an awareness that next to the United States, the Federal Republic remains the largest financial and commercial supporter of Israel.

- \* The explosion of democratic forces in Eastern Europe is largely welcomed by Jews, but enthusiasm is diminished by the deep-rooted anti-Semitism that seems married to xenophobic nationalism. Israel's quiet but growing trade and cultural ties with Hungary, Poland, and other East European countries will be watched with interest.

- \* Anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe and elsewhere became a major issue of constructive concern with Vatican authorities in Prague in September, and later in Rome with Pope John Paul II in

(more)



December.

\* Foreign affairs often obscured pressing Jewish domestic concerns, of which there are many. The rise in intermarriages nationally to 49 percent, as recent studies revealed, and the decline of conversions of non-Jewish partners posed deeply nettlesome questions to all of Jewry.

\* On the "joyous" side, the turn to tradition of increasing number of Reform and Conservative Jews is reassuring. The emergence of modern Orthodoxy, including the burgeoning Hasidic movements, bids to influence the national policy-making of established national Jewish agencies.

But mainstream Jewry, I believe, will watch carefully that some of the exclusionary and anti-democratic stands of ultra-Orthodox forces in Israel not be imported to distort U.S. Jewish life.

The best way I can suggest the mood of this vastly complex foreign and domestic Jewish scene is to recall a line from my mother, of blessed memory. When we asked her to define a genuine Jewish pleasure, she wryly answered, "A Jewish pleasure, my children, is a cool Yom Kippur."

The 1990s may well see such a cool Yom Kippur for world Jewry.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, former international relations director of the American Jewish Committee, is past chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations.*

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FOR JTA

NEW FILM ON POPE JOHN PAUL II IS POSITIVE  
CONTRIBUTION TO CATHOLIC-JEWISH RELATIONS

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Rabbi Tanenbaum, director of international relations of the American Jewish Committee, served as Jewish consultant to the film on Pope John Paul II.)

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A just-completed film on the life and ~~waxx~~ career of Pope John Paul II is, in my judgment, good for the Jews. The two-and-a-half film was previewed last week before a predominantly Catholic audience in New York's Lincoln Center and received sustained applause.

Titled simply, "John Paul II," the film dramatization will be shown in Vatican City on Nov. 12, and will be aired over CBS-Television network during February 1984 (exact date not set yet.) According to Allen Morris of Taft Enterprises Company, co-producers with Alvin Cooperman-DePaul Productions, the Pope John Paul film will in time be shown throughout Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America in diverse languages and therefore its potential impact is global in scope.

Acted brilliantly by the British actor Albert Finney, this Papal lifestory contains a number of dramatic scenes of special interest to Jews. The script deals forthrightly with the pervasiveness of anti-Semitism in pre-World War II Poland, the horrors of the Nazi holocaust, and the response of Pope John Paul II both as youth, prelate, and later as Archbishop of Cracow.

The first encounter with crude anti-Semitism takes place in a cafe in Wadowice, the Pope's birthplace. A drunken Polish policeman



named Moljek rants about the oncoming Nazis:

"We beat the Germans in 1918. We beat the Russians in 1920. We did the work of ten, each of us did. We ate starving dogs--more value to us than the Jews, I can tell you."

Karol Wojtyla, then a teen-ager, identified strongly with his close Jewish friend and classmate, Theodor Krawich. In a subsequent poignant scene, Karol and Theodor are picnicing in a ~~meadow~~ meadow, and Theodor talks with pain about being taunted as "Jew Boy," by <sup>and</sup> other Polish youth~~s~~ who tore his coat. Karol, in a burst of anger, responds:

"It's ignorance! The exact opposite of what Christ taught! Feel sorry for him. He's ignorant."

Then Theodor says: "I can't wait to leave this place...You've been like a brother to me, Lolek. I mean it."

Catholics, and other Christians, will be able to understand the bestiality of the Nazis as Jews understand it - perhaps even he helped to identify with ~~Jews~~ and join in solidarity with Jews - as a result of such brutal encounters with the Nazi Governor General of Poland, Hans Frank, who arrogantly proclaims to Archbishop Sapieha his plans for the ~~future~~ fate of Poles and Jews:

"Poles, like Jews, are Untermenschen, subhumans. They have no right to life. But we intend to use some of them...the Slavs, not the Jews...as a work force of the German Reich...Every educated person will be regarded as an enemy and marked down for destruction. Jews will be done away with. ~~We shall~~ We shall make the name of Poland a long-forgotten name on the ancient maps."

The most explicit - and moving - involvement of Karol Wojtyla ~~takes~~ in the fate of Jews takes place in two scenes. One is in a stone quarry where he comes to the defense of a Jewish laborer from Auschwitz

and saves his life as a Nazi guard is about to beat him to death. The other portrays Wojtyla joining an underground Polish group that saves the lives of a Jewish family. There are several long dramatic scenes showing the future Pope handing out forged passports and leading the Teitlebaum family through Nazi guards to safety.

Capping that emphasis in Wojtyla's life under the Nazis is a scene where his girl friend complains that he does not have enough time for her. She says: "Everyone knows what you're doing...taking Jewish families out of the ghettos, finding them places to hide. Is that what's keeping you away?"

That sensitivity to Jews, his opposition to anti-Semitism, continues into his later career. Toward the end of the film, Cardinal Wojtyla calls a meeting of the Curia, the bishops, of Cracow to discuss the struggle with the Polish Communist government. The cardinal asks his bishops to join him in supporting ~~the struggle of~~ the students and academics in their struggle against the government. One of the bishops complains that many of the academics are Jews, therefore, why support them? Cardinal Wojtyla replies: "The government uses that to deflect attention from the issues."

It should be made clear that this film is devoted overwhelmingly to the life and career of Pope John Paul II, and that his attitude towards Jews and anti-Semitism is a secondary, even tertiary theme. But precisely because this is a film made for Christian audiences primarily and such a well-made and impactful story of heroic proportions, its strong positive references to this Pope's attitudes and behavior toward Jews can only be a derivative, <sup>but</sup> ~~and~~ important benefit in affirming Catholic friendship for the Jewish people.



4 March  
Please Read  
Even ASAP!  
THANKS

AGAIN  
Benny

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BISHOPS' OPPOSITION TO QUEEN ISABELLA  
SAINTHOOD SIGN OF GOOD FAITH

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

--NEW YORK

The unanimous decision on the part some 40 Roman Catholic bishops to oppose efforts to make a saint of Queen Isabella of Spain is an important sign of Vatican respect for Jewish -- and Moslem -- feelings.

It is also a perceptive effort by these 20th century churchmen to prevent the making of a mockery of the ancient Catholic tradition of devotion to saints. Thus, in my judgment, these enlightened bishops have taken this position against Queen Isabella not only to avoid offending Jews and Moslems, but more so to preserve the culture of the veneration of saints which has become a vital part of Catholic spiritual tradition.

That assures that this action is for real, and not just a matter of good public relations with Jews and others.

Many Jews I have spoken with find it difficult to believe that educated Catholics, certainly bishops, were not aware of the bestial cruelty and destruction in which Queen Isabella engaged in during the Spanish Inquisition in the 15th century. My own examination of Catholic history books and encyclopedia disclosed that Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand were treated mainly as gifted statespeople.

To use a modern metaphor, they made Spain's "railroads run on time." Little or virtually nothing meaningful is included in these texts about their horrendous destruction of the lives of Jews, Marranos, and also Moors.

As Jewish representatives made available the Jewish facts of that abominable history of Isabella's torture, the horrors of the Spanish Inquisition, and the pre-tech Nazi-like behavior of Tomas de Torquemada, the Inspector General of the inquisition, there was a unanimous response on the part of Catholic bishops, especially in the United States and most of Western Europe, that this sainthood project could not be allowed to proceed.

They were faced with the criteria of Catholic saints, dating back to the third century, which "takes the form of praise and imitation of the saints' virtues and of invocation, both private and public, addressed to the saints to win their intercession with God."

Those spiritual virtues of saints became impossible to reconcile with the Jewish record of Queen Isabella actually participating in the burning alive of Jews and marranos, and their final brutal expulsion of more than 200,000 Jews from Spain in 1492.

One final comment: The Pontifical Commission of 40 bishops' resolution spoke of the Queen Isabella decision as being postponed indefinitely."

While several Catholic officials made clear that language means "it is a dead case now," several Jewish leaders asked me why did not the bishops say that in clear terms.

I have no interest in defending the Vatican -- they do that well enough themselves. But I think it is important for the Jewish community to understand that the classic Vatican style in situations of controversy is to use "calculated ambiguity."

In that evasive way they are able to avoid a major conflict internally with the right-wing Catholics who are advocating sainthood for Queen Isabella, while at the same time informing Catholics, and also Jews and Moslems that this matter is dead as a doornail.

## NAZI VIDEOS UPDATE HITLER'S LEGACY

By Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

News reports of the distribution in Austria and Germany of Nazi video and computer games have been met with shock and outrage. And with good historic reasons.

The games invite the player to pretend that he or she is a manager of a Nazi death camp. The player wins points for gassing Jewish, extracting gold fillings from their teeth and selling lamp shades made from their bodies.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, which made public the knowledge that there are about 140 such video games, performed a valuable service in making all of us aware of these diabolical "diversions."

It is important, I believe, to know the intentions of these games and their possible damaging consequences. In point of historic fact, these are not post-World War II innovations.

During the Third Reich, Hitler and the Nazi "education" bureaucracy had prepared an entire school curriculum which included anti-Semitic picture books and children's toys. In the Nazi memorabilia collection in the American Jewish Committee's library, there is an early Nazi game, called "Juden Raus."

That game consists of movable pieces in the likeness of Jews wearing yellow dunce caps. The object of the game is to move Jews out of Germany to Palestine, until the Nazi Reich is made Judenrein.

The central intention of the Nazi education and propaganda campaigns was to transform Jews into monstrous gargoyles and thereby dehumanize the Jewish people in preparation for the Final Solution.

In the 1970s, so-called Aryan groups in the United States reprinted these Nazi materials in English, including all the hateful caricatures of Jews.

What makes these present neo-Nazi video and computer games even more dangerous is that they employ technology the young generation is already plugged into.

But while the graphics may be new, the danger these games pose is as old as the Thousand-Year Reich. Like Hitler's textbooks, these games reduce the horrors of genocide to fun and games, and substitute cartoon caricatures for the murderous reality of history.

It is not irrelevant, I believe, that during the past weeks groups of young neo-Nazis and Skinheads carried out demonstrations in Dresden, Magdeburg, and Leipzig -- all in former East Germany.

Ironically, they were denying that Jews were killed in Nazi death camps at the same time that other Nazis were distributing games based on the murder of Jews in Nazi death camps.

The only positive resolution to this episode would be a determination on the part of the German and Austrian governments to pursue the manufacturers of these games and prosecute them to the fullest extent allowable under the two countries' respective hate laws.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of the international relations department of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*



Summer  
1991

## CARDINAL GLEMP'S VISIT IS CHALLENGE TO JEWISH WISDOM

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

--NEW YORK

When Cardinal Jozef Glemp, primate of the Polish Catholic church, visits the United States in early September, it would be the better part of wisdom for American Jewish leadership not to allow some self-appointed individuals snatch defeat from victory.

Cardinal Glemp's homily delivered on August 26, 1989, at the shrine of Czestochowa was without question deeply offensive in its gross anti-Semitism. Born in December 1929, the son of a salt-miner, Glemp received no schooling during the Nazi occupation until he began his education at the age of 15 just after the liberation.

He had no contact with Jews, and imbibed uncritically the pre-war Polish traditions of anti-Semitism in their crudest, most vulgar forms.

But a lot has happened with the Polish cardinal which must be taken into serious account if we want to behave responsibly. His primitive August 1989 homily received strong protest from international Catholic quarters, and quite justifiably from Jewish leaders around the world.

In London, on September 20, 1989, he made public a letter in which he acknowledged "the untold suffering of the Jewish people whose each and every member stand unequalled among all martyrs nations. The tragedy and sacrifice of the Shoah defies any comparison."

He committed himself to the 1987 Geneva Declaration which obligates the Polish church to transfer the Carmelite convent to a new center which is now being built.

Cardinal Glemp gave his primatial authority to the extraordinary declaration of the Polish Catholic hierarchy which condemned anti-Semitism "as evil and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel." He approved the reading of that historic pastoral document in every Polish Catholic church in January 1991, an unprecedented act in the history of Poland.

In his latest declaration of August 23, 1991, addressed to a Polish Catholic archbishop in Detroit, he expressed regrets over misunderstandings in 1989 and rejected his charge that "seven Jewish demonstrators" intended physical harm to the Carmelite sisters or destruction of their convent.

On the eve of the High Holidays, the season of repentance, it is useful to recall Maimonides' teachings on the four stages of teshuvah: first, one must experience a deep sense of shame for one's sins; second, there must be an explicit acknowledgement of the nature of the transgression; third, there must be a determination to change for the better; and finally, one must undertake concrete actions to demonstrate that change has taken place.

I do not know whether Cardinal Glemp is a genuine basl teshuvah. But he and the Polish Catholic church he leads have shown demonstrable signs they are undergoing serious corrective changes in their attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, the Nazi holocaust, and Israel.

When a group of us from the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC) meet with Cardinal Glemp and American Catholic cardinals and bishops on September 20th in Washington, D.C., we will have an opportunity to experience how real and serious are the changes Cardinal Glemp publicly claims he has undergone in Polish-Jewish relations.

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY

COMMENTARY (400 words)

FOR RELEASE

JANUARY 18, 1991

## SHOULD SOVIET JEWS GO TO GERMANY?

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

The migration of hundreds of Soviet Jews to the reunified German republic has given rise to a deeply emotional debate in the world Jewish community.

That intense controversy is probably inevitable since it involves the major contemporary themes of Jewish life.

Converging in this debate are the crucial questions: How best to help assure the security and survival of Israel, especially at this critical time? How best to assure the safety and well-being of Soviet Jews who are increasingly threatened by anti-Semitism? Should Jewish policy toward Germany be one of distance, or affirmation of its evolving democratic institutions?

And finally, how long can American and other Western Jewish communities advocate aliyah for Soviet Jews while avoiding that decision for themselves?

The principal participants in this intense "cheshebon hanefesh," or soul-searching, are Jewish survivors of the Nazi Holocaust, Israeli Jewry, Soviet immigrants and American Jewish leadership.

Survivors of the Nazi Holocaust cannot understand how any Jew would want to live in Germany, whose soil is soaked with Jewish blood. They generally view German history from 1945 backwards, and do not trust the democratic evolution there during the past 45 years.

Beyond that, Jewish survivors feel that Soviet Jews should go to Israel and help strengthen the Jewish State against her Arab enemies, now dramatized by Saddam Hussein's threats.

Most other Jewish leaders I have spoken with share the same feelings about the priority of helping Israel through increased migration.

But Western, particularly American, Jewish leaders were raised on strong democratic traditions of individual freedoms, and therefore feel intuitively that Soviet Jews should have the right to choose where they wish to settle.

This is apparently becoming increasingly a conflict between commitments to individual rights and group responsibility for Jewish survival.

The issue is complicated by the reality that there is truth and moral validity in both positions.

It will take a large measure of patience, compassion and wisdom to help Soviet Jews serve their legitimate individual interests and, at the same time, their group responsibilities to the Jewish people.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, former international relations director of the American Jewish Committee, is a past chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (475 words)

FOR RELEASE  
MARCH 22, 1991

# LORD JAKOBOVITS RICHLY DESERVES TEMPLETON PRIZE

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

Lord Immanuel Jakobovits, the distinguished chief rabbi of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, has just been honored with the most prestigious award in the world of religion, the 1991 Sir John Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

The prize, which confers some \$800,000 on Lord Jakobovits, is larger than any Nobel Peace Prize, mainly because Sir Templeton, a devout Presbyterian, believes that religion is the most important force for uniting mankind.

Having had some limited contacts with the chief rabbi, I believe it is just and appropriate that he is the first Jew to receive this prestigious award. Among the past 21 recipients were people of such stature as Mother Teresa, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the Rev. Dr. Billy Graham.

The reasons for his selection, in my judgment, rest on the fusion of his personal qualities and merits as well as his distinctive authority as chief rabbi of the United Kingdom.

Lord Jakobovits is a "Talmud chacham," a profoundly learned Orthodox Jewish scholar. At the same time, he is keenly attuned to the needs of the modern world. His major work on "Jewish Medical Ethics" is a classic in the field.

His traditionalism has anchored him in the profound humanism of Jewish values. He has manifested that compassion and moderation in almost every area of life to which he has turned his attention.

In 1957, at the first conference of European rabbis, Jakobovits strongly called on Orthodox rabbis to quit feuding with Reform Jews and to cooperate instead in opposing the evils of paganism, that is, no religious convictions and loyalties at all.

After returning from Israel following the 1967 war, he stirred controversy when he insisted that there were no religious impediments to territorial concessions for the sake of peace, provided Israel's security was ensured. He often urged Jewish understanding for "the intolerable plight of Arab refugees in wretched camps," even if their condition was caused by the Arab states.

It is interesting to reflect on whether any American rabbi or other Jewish leader could long uphold such unpopular views and still retain any meaningful constituency. This suggests to me that the status of the United Synagogue in Great Britain and the universally recognized authority of the chief rabbi -- comparable to the established Anglican Church and the Archbishop of Canterbury -- makes it possible for a Jewish leader to be courageous and controversial without suffering reprisals.

Democratic pluralism in American Jewish life, with all the inevitable competition that ensues, is the source of much creativity and effectiveness. But will American Jewry, within its pluralistic system, ever be able to accept the unique moral authority that makes a Lord Immanuel Jakobovits possible?

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of international and interreligious relations of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (450 words)

FOR RELEASE  
MARCH 8, 1991

MAKING QUEEN ISABELLA A SAINT  
WILL UNDERMINE 1992 SPANISH OBSERVANCES

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

There is a lot riding on the planned 1992 observances of the Spanish government and the world Sephardi community.

Spain has announced plans to revoke the March 1492 order of Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand that expelled some 200,000 tortured and humiliated Sephardi Jews from Catholic Spain. This dramatic action is apparently intended to demonstrate to the world, and especially to world Jewry, that modern Spain has decisively rejected that medieval world of fanaticism, violence and anti-Semitism.

Not to be too cynical, but it seems that such powerful humanistic symbolism would also not hurt Spain's declining tourist industry, particularly among Jews. Nor would it weaken Spain's intensive campaign to improve commercial and trade relations with the United States, in which American Jews play a vital role.

For Sephardic Jewry, the 1992 observance affords a valid opportunity to heighten worldwide consciousness of the glorious contributions made by Spanish Jewry to religion, literature and culture. The international Sepharad program would in fact signal the renaissance of Sephardic Jewry in Israel and in many other parts of the world.

In the midst of all these generally positive developments, an ultra-conservative Catholic priest in Spain, originally from Argentina, has organized an effort to persuade the Vatican to beatify as a saint Queen Isabella, the mother of the Spanish Inquisition. He wants the sainthood to take place in 1992.

His intention appears to be to embarrass the progressive Spanish socialist government and post-Vatican Council II Catholics in Spain who support freedom of religion for Jews and Protestants.

Given the acknowledgment that Isabella and Ferdinand were actual criminals, and the central and decisive role in waging the brutalities of the Inquisition against the Jews and the Moors -- forcing conversion of Marranos and Moriscos -- it is difficult to believe that wiser minds in the Vatican would yield to these reactionary petitions.

But, if by some freak of mindlessness or Byzantine manipulation, Queen Isabella was to become beatified and sainted, the 1992 celebrations could explode as if hit by an unguided theological Scud missile.

Some of us have made our documentation and views on the disaster of Isabella-as-saint known to the Vatican and to Catholic cardinals and bishops who are friends. There seems to be much understanding and I expect there will be a serious effort to head off this international insult at the Vatican pass before everybody is deeply offended.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, former international relations director of the American Jewish Committee, is a past chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.*



A TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
HASHOAH COMMENTARY (475 words)

FOR RELEASE  
MARCH 29, 1991

THE IMPACT OF YOM HASHOAH ON THE CHRISTIAN WORLD

By Marc H. Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

Yom Hashoah, which falls this year on April 11, has had two primary purposes since its proclamation by Israel's Knesset.

Its primary intention was to enable Jews to commemorate the memories of the 6 million Jewish martyrs massacred by the Nazis. That sacred purpose has been widely realized, as virtually every Jewish community throughout the world observes this holy day of honoring our dead brothers and sisters.

There has also been a parallel purpose to Yom Hashoah -- to make the vast Christian and Gentile worlds aware of the magnitude of the horrors inflicted on Jews as a result of centuries of demonic anti-Semitism, especially in Europe, both East and West.

The raising of that consciousness has not been a matter of revenge or guilt. It was, and is, to galvanize the moral responsibility of the Christian world to stand against anti-Jewish bigotry and to develop mutual respect and solidarity between nearly a billion Christians and world Jewry.

Judging by recent pronouncements and actions of Roman Catholic and Protestant bodies, the profound message of Yom Hashoah's call to humanizing the Christian conscience regarding Jews and Judaism has begun to have deep effects.

In Prague last September, we heard the president of the Vatican Secretariat on Religious Relations with the Jews, Archbishop Edward Cassidy, call on the Roman Catholic world to engage in "teshuvah," repentance for the horrors Catholics inflicted on Jews across the centuries.

In Rome in December, Pope John Paul II gave his personal support to the Prague declarations, and urged Catholics to combat anti-Semitism and to recall the meaning of the Holocaust for Jews as well as for Christians.

Perhaps most dramatic of all, the entire Polish Catholic hierarchy issued a powerful pastoral letter repudiating hatred of Jews in Poland and urging increased dialogue and mutual knowledge. Bishop Henryk Muszynski, a wonderful Polish bishop, was the catalyst in the historic undertaking which involved the reading of that pastoral in every Polish Catholic Church on Jan. 20.

Similar forthright declarations have been issued by Catholic and also by many Protestant hierarchies in Czechoslovakia, Hungarian primates, the German and Austrian bishops, and other European, Central, North and South American Catholic leaders, especially the Brazilians.

What all this means for the future between Christians and Jews is still to be determined. But it certainly is evidence that Yom Hashoah has had enormous impact on sensitizing the leadership of the Christian world to the horrors of the past and the need for creating a more humane and responsible future, for Jews and the whole human family.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of international relations of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY  
COMMENTARY (475 words)

FOR RELEASE  
MAY 10, 1991

SHOULD JEWS WORRY ABOUT MELDING  
OF CHURCH AND STATE IN POLAND?

By Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

The reported proposal of the Roman Catholic bishops to abrogate church-state separation in Poland holds ambiguous meanings for Jews.

Should such a revised concordat between the Polish state and the Catholic Church be enacted, it would not be the first time. Poland's constitution of 1921 had granted the Catholic Church an official and privileged position among the country's religious communities.

Article 114 of that constitution provided as follows: "The Roman Catholic religion, being that of the great majority of the nation, occupies the first place among the religions accepted as such by the State. . . . The relations of the State and Church will be determined on the basis of a Concordat with the Holy See, which shall be ratified by the Sejm (Parliament)."

The forging of that church-state alliance had fatal consequences for the Jews of Poland. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Polish Catholic Church was integrally allied with right-wing, reactionary and anti-Semitic parties in Poland. The Camp of National Unity exploited anti-Semitism as a central political theme, and publicly made a case for excluding all of the several million Polish Jews from the country's political and cultural life.

In 1936, Cardinal Hlond, the Primate of Poland, issued a pastoral letter condemning Jews in invidious terms. He called for an economic boycott of all Jewish businesses and professions.

For obvious -- and tragic -- reasons, this latter-day attempt at a renewed alliance of Polish state and church represents far less of a threat to the Jewish community in Poland, which is today comprised of about 7,000 to 10,000 mostly elderly Jews.

Weighed in the balance must be the recent remarkable declaration of the Polish Catholic bishops who in January 1991 unambiguously condemned anti-Semitism and called for a systematic educational campaign to uproot these poisonous weeds from Polish life.

While I believe the cause of human rights should compel Jewish concern about such regressive moves in Poland or anywhere else, it would be foolhardy for Jews to be first in line to try to save Poland from its past.

The Polish intellectual and cultural leadership, particularly Polish youth, have a self-evident stake in keeping their nation open, democratic and committed to freedom of conscience and religion. The European Community, in which Poland may one day join, also has a primary interest in strengthening democracy and human rights among all their member nations, present or future.

Tragically, the Nazi Holocaust, which resulted in the destruction of more than 3 million Polish Jews, has rendered this church-state question more a symbolic issue than a real threat to the Jewish people.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of the international relations department of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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## THE PANGS OF SALVATION?

By Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

Saddam Hussein's aggression left in its wake hundreds of thousands of anguished refugees.

Before the international community could mobilize its resources to alleviate their plight, terrifying typhoons wrought massive destruction in an impoverished Bangladesh.

Deemed somewhat less newsworthy, earthquakes nevertheless unleashed their fury in Soviet Georgia and Costa Rica.

Almost unnoticed, but horrifying in the sheer scale of human suffering, are the predictions by experts that several million people will starve to death in the coming months in the Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia and other parts of Africa.

Meanwhile, an estimated 16 million refugees wander hopelessly in Afghanistan, Pakistan, throughout Africa and in Southeast Asia.

Tornadoes batter towns in Kansas, Texas, and elsewhere in the Midwest and Southwest United States.

Does suffering on such a vast scale require a fundamental revision of our international priorities? Can the international community cope with all this human tragedy?

There has been much generosity, especially on the part of the United States and Western Europe. But as the Kurdish and Bangladesh casualties -- and needs -- mount, it is becoming increasingly difficult to mobilize the moral will and the resources needed to prevent further deaths on a massive scale.

The Persian Gulf War saw coalition forces contribute billions of dollars in a matter of weeks to contain the Iraqi president's aggression. Is it possible to bring to the relief of human suffering the same determination and political will?

As we wrangle with this question, perhaps we can find some consolation in the Jewish teaching regarding "chevlei Mashiach," the tribulations that tradition tells us will attend the coming of the Messiah.

That tradition suggests that the world will be turned upside down -- subject to every conceivable pain, suffering and turmoil -- as a condition precedent to the coming of the Messiah.

Looking at the natural and human horrors that envelop so much of the world, a good case could be made for the Messiah's coming sooner rather than later.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of the international relations department of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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JEWISH-ETHNIC DIALOGUE

By Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

A considerable amount of attention is being devoted in the nation's major media to demographic changes in American society occasioned by the rise of Asians, Hispanics and blacks in many of our large cities.

While the 1990 census is still the subject of charges of undercounting, the numbers that did emerge tell of some clear trends in New York City. The city's white population dropped by half a million people, while the population of Asian-Americans doubled and the Hispanic population rose by 30 percent. Blacks made up 28.7 percent of New York's population in 1990, up from 25 percent in 1980.

"Every New Yorker is now a minority," wrote one commentator.

These numbers have at times been reported with a hint of breathless anxiety, as if the demographic shifts they represent are a clap of thunder out of the blue.

In point of fact, students of American demography and ethnic groups began to recognize this changing pattern as early as the 1970s. All of the major Jewish intergroup agencies began developing strategies two decades ago for relating to Asian, Hispanic, black, and Native American groups.

Most of the Jewish community-relations groups around the country undertook, during the past two decades, to cultivate relationships with leaders and key players in each of these ethnic groups in their communities.

The crucial issue, I believe, is not whether Jewish agencies both nationally and locally are alert and responsive to these important religious, racial, and ethnic changes. I think by and large the evidence is that they know what is going on in these population shifts and are generally being creative in their search for common ground.

The critical question is how Jewish agencies will define their relationships with the ascendant ethnic bodies.

For a period of time, some theoreticians and practitioners in the Jewish community appeared to support an unbridled assertion of ethnicity in unconditional terms. Such ethnic assertion, however, quickly becomes ethnic aggression, demanding entitlements from society while acknowledging it few duties.

Dr. Martin Marty, a leading Protestant scholar, wrote some years ago that the dynamic of American pluralism involves a tension between "identity and exposure." Each group has a right and a duty to define its identity in its own terms. But if each group cares only for itself, the result will be an America Balkanized into rival camps.

Dr. Marty added that there is an obligation on each and every religious, racial and ethnic group, once its identity is realized, to expose its values and culture for the benefit of the general society.

It is such a conception of the duties and responsibilities to one's own group and to the general welfare that should become the basis of the new cycle of ethnic relationships in our changing nation.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of the international relations department of the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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WINS RELIGION COMMENTARY  
June 9, 1991  
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM

PARADES OF PERSIAN GULF VETERANS

Operation Welcome Home for Persian Gulf veterans is, in the words of President Bush, "good for America."

Some critics call it a celebration of militarism.

With millions of other Americans, I choose to see the parades as acts of the nation's appreciation of thousands of young Americans who risked their lives to oppose aggression and brutality.

The parades also present other powerful moral images. The Desert Storm victory was largely won through the solidarity of all American groups--black, white, Hispanic, Asians, Christians and Jews. That is an urgent message still to be brought to our homes, schools and streets where bigotry and hate crimes are corroding America.

It has been suggested that our government should send teams of young military men and women into the major cities of this country. They are our new folk heroes, and they have lessons to teach our people about mutual respect and cooperation.

That surely would also be good for America.

RESCUE THE LIVING OR HONOR THE DEAD?  
A LOOK AT JEWISH PRIORITIES

By Marc Tanenbaum

(Copyright 1991, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc.)

--NEW YORK

When I was appointed by President Jimmy Carter to serve on the President's Commission on the Holocaust, I supported with enthusiasm the idea of building Holocaust memorials in Washington and elsewhere across the nation.

During those early days, I believe I was the first to propose that it was important to invite major Christian leaders to serve side by side with Jews on that commission.

Jews did not require a memorial or a commission to recite Kaddish over the kedoshim -- the sacred six million Jews murdered by the Nazis.

But the Christian world, which I found in my travels to be virtually illiterate about the magnitude of the tragedy that befell our people at the hands of Nazi Germany, urgently required systematic exposure to the facts and the lessons of the Holocaust in order to create an immunity against anti-Semitism and any possible future horrors.

I am satisfied in my conscience that my joining with others in support of Holocaust memorials and inviting important Christian leaders to join the commission were right and wise decisions.

In recent weeks, I have been writing and speaking widely about the twin miracles of Ethiopian and Soviet Jewish migrations to Israel. Given the enormous economic burdens, among others, that Israel faces, the loving response of Israelis to this kibbutz galuyot -- ingathering of the exiles -- is also nothing less than a miracle.

I have been appealing to United Jewish Appeal audiences to stretch themselves, perform an American Jewish miracle, in enlarging their contributions for Operation Exodus and Operation Solomon. My thesis is that if we do everything possible now to save live Jews, we will not need in later years to spend millions of dollars -- God forbid -- to memorialize dead Jews.

Pidyon shevuyim, the redemption of living captives, is such an overriding mitzvah that Jewish tradition requires that one be prepared to sell a sefer torah -- or even a synagogue -- in order to save Jewish lives.

The continued massive efforts to save the lives of Soviet and Ethiopian Jews and to help them become fully absorbed in Israeli society should be our highest priorities in the months ahead.

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*Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, for 30 years the director of interreligious and international relations at the American Jewish Committee, is now a lecturer, writer and consultant.*

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## MISGUIDED MULTICULTURALISM

By Marc Tanenbaum

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-- NEW YORK

**"One Nation, Many Peoples: A Declaration for Cultural Interdependence."**

That is the title of a 97-page report recently drafted by a committee of schoolteachers and scholars recommending radical changes in the teaching of social science and history in New York's school system.

In effect, the report caricatures and maligns the idea that there is a valid common core of American history and culture. It calls for a de-emphasis on the unity of American society in favor of the view that racial and ethnic differences make up the substance of "the real America."

I have worked with textbook publishers for many years, advocating a more adequate portrayal of the role of Jews and Judaism in the shaping of America. As a consequence, I am in complete sympathy with similar calls by other groups in the American mosaic of peoples.

But advocacy I was involved in took place in the context of a deep appreciation of the uniqueness of American democracy and the blessings of liberty which nourished all its citizens. By contrast, what emerges from the New York report is a proposal for defaming and rendering monstrous early American history, as a means of idealizing each of the diverse racial and ethnic groups which found its way to these shores.

Neither extreme -- neither defamation nor mindless group cheerleading -- contributes to the overriding purpose of education: the search for truth. Were one to apply to any religious, racial or ethnic group the same standards applied by the New York report to America's origins, the result would hardly be ennobling.

The history of Africa would include stories of great kingdoms, but also of bitter slavery imposed by Africans on each other and murderous tribal conflicts that continue to this day. Asians would have to cope with the Samurai warlords of Japan and the ruthless massacres by Koreans of Chinese and by Chinese of Koreans. Hispanic conquistadors are hardly heroes to emulate. European religious and national warfare bloodied the continent, and a desire to escape that charnel house -- as well as the oppressive, authoritarian governments of Great Britain and other European countries steeped in corruption and violence -- contributed to the birth of America.

America became a unique experiment, a place where ordinary people could realize religious and political freedoms and find equality of opportunity.

One of the most telling experience of my life, which stamped this appreciation of American democracy on my mind, took place in a refugee camp for Vietnamese boat people in Thailand in 1978.

As I walked through the camp, a beautiful 10-year-old Vietnamese girl followed me everywhere I went. Finally, as I turned toward her, she haltingly said: "Mister, take me to America with you. America is liberty."

Millions of religious, racial and ethnic refugees who continue to flock to these shores clearly have that sentiment in their hearts. Let our educational system reveal that truth about this nation as well.