### Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 11, Folder 12, Auschwitz - Carmelite controversy, 1986.

Carolina

La presse s'est dernièrement fait l'écho de l'émotion, pour ne pas dire l'indignation, soulevée par l'établissement à Auschwitz d'un Carmel où quelques soeurs vivent déjà. Nous avons donc été amenés à réfléchir sur cette création.

Auschwitz désigne l'endroit où la solution finale, c'est-à-dire l'extermination des Juifs, parce que Juifs, a été perpétrée. Il y a eu d'autres camps infamants mais Auschwitz les résume tous : Auschwitz est un symbole sacré.

Auschwitz c'est le lieu terrible de la Passion juive. Il ne faut ni l'occulter ni se l'approprier. Toute ingérence, quelle qu'elle soit, serait outrageante à l'égard de nos frères aînés dans la foi. Auschwitz doit rester tel quel afin de demeurer un enseignement pour les générations à venir.

Il ne s'agit pas de nier le sort des victimes non juives, internées et exécutées dans ce camp, pour faits de guerre ou de résistance, mais de souligner ce qui a fait la spécificité du génocide des Juifs.

Si une démarche réelle de repentance à l'égard du peuple juif, prenant en compte toute l'histoire chrétienne, avait été faite par l'Eglise et diffusée auprès des consciences chrétiennes, une telle initiative aurait-elle eu lieu ? Ne manifeste-t-elle pas en outre l'insuffisance de la réflexion théologique et morale sur la Shoah au cours des dernières années ?

Nous avons pu avoir en mains le tract émanant de la branche belge de l'organisation "Aide à l'Eglise en Détresse" destiné à recueillir des fonds pour la construction du Carmel d'Auschwitz et nous y trouvons plusieurs éléments inacceptables :

"Les carmélites font pénitence <u>pour nous qui sommes encore en vie</u>. Elles construisent de leurs mains le signe sacré de l'amour, de la paix, de la réconciliation qui témoignera de la <u>puissance victorieuse</u> de la Croix de Jésus. Le couvent deviendra une <u>forteresse spirituelle</u>, un gage de la <u>conversion des frères égarés</u> de nos pays, une preuve de bonne volonté pour <u>effacer l'outrage</u> (de quel outrage s'agit-il ici ?) dont le Vicaire du Christ est si souvent l'objet..."

- le mot juif n'y figure pas,
- le texte montre un triomphalisme de l'Eglise auquel on pensait que le Concile Vatican II avait mis fin,
- un Carmel n'a nullement besoin d'être installé sur le site même d'Auschwitz,
   l'Eglise, continuant des errements anciens, ne peut se substituer au peuple
  juif comme si celui-ci avait cessé d'exister à la mort du Christ. Or l'histoire
  prouve qu'en dépit de toutes les violences et des exactions qu'il a subies,
  le peuple juif non seulement est bien vivant, mais qu'il a encore beaucoup de
  choses à enseigner aux chrétiens (le respect des Ecritures, le respect de la
  transcendance de Dieu, la lutte contre les idoles anciennes et modernes...)

En application d'une part des Orientations pastorales du Comité Episcopal pour les relations avec le Judaïsme publiées le 16 avril 1973, d'autre part des Notes pour une correcte présentation des Juifs et du Judaïsme dans la prédication et la catéchèse de l'Eglise catholique, publiées en Mai 1985 par la Commission pour les relations religieuses avec le Judaïsme, Nous, Chrétiens de l'A.J.C.F. déclarons ne pouvoir accepter l'implantation à Auschwitz de ce Carmel, quelles que soient les intentions qui ont inspiré son installation.

8 Janvier 1986

Les Chrétiens de l'Amitié
Judéo-Chrétienne de France

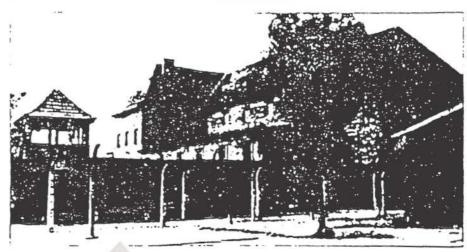
75010 Paris

### Votre don au Pape: un couvent à Auschwitz

Immediatement avant la deuxième querre mondiale, le gros œuvre du theatre municipal d'Auschwitz etait acheve. On n'y a jamais donne de representation, si ce n'est le drame de quatre millions d'innocents qui sont morts ici. Les nazis confisquerent le theatre et en firent un depot de gaz dont ils avaient besoin pour leur he-

Le batiment sombre se trouve tout pres du "mur de la mort" et du block 2 ou Maximilien Kolbe mourut comme martyr. Sœur Benedicte de la Croix et Edith Stein egalement y trouverent, en plus de la mort, la vie eternelle.

Apres de longues tractations, le magasin a ete prete aux carmetites dechaussees. Elles obtinrent la permission de transformer l'interieur en couvent. Ainsi, de ce lieu, jadis point de depart de la mort, rayonnera une vie



Le couvent des carmelites à Auschwitz construit comme théâtre, maudit comme depôt de gaz loxique, beni comme loyer d'amour, de prière et de reconciliation. Ce sera votre don au Saint-Père

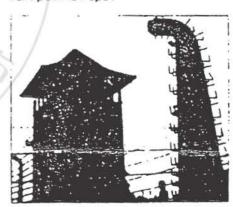


Ceci deviendra le cœur et le Sanctuaire du couvent Là où jadis -le Méchant crache du poison pour debuire des vies. l'Esprit de Oren élit Sa demeure pour remplir de vie la terre entière

nouvelle. Huit carmelites et desolé. Jour et nuit, elles ont devant les yeux des millions de morts, elles prient et font penitence pour nous qui sommes encore en vie. et elles construisent de leurs mains le signe sacre de l'amour, de la paix et de la reconciliation qui temoignera de la puissance victorieuse de la Croix de Jesus

Notre Œuvre qui, a la demande du cardinal Wyszynski, a deja accepte le patronage de soixante couvents de contemplatives en Pologne, veul pourvoir aussi a ce qui manque encore au nouveau carmel d'Auschwitz.

Apres la visite du Pape, nous vouhabitent dejà l'endroit froid lons, comme don de nos bienfaiteurs du Beneiux, lui remettre la somme necessaire pour l'achevement de ce couvent qui deviendra une forteresse spirituelle, un gage de la conversion des freres egares de nos pays et une preuve de notre bonne volonté pour effacer l'outrage dont le Vicaire du Christ est si souvent l'objet... Voulezyous participer a cette offrande? Versez votre don en mentionnant: Un couvent pour le Pape!



La porte de l'enfer devient celle du ciel

Cette lillette met sa petite main dans la main de l'homme qui chemine avec Dieu. Il n'y a pas trace d'orgueil ou de desobeissance en elle

Puissions-nous tous mettre notre main dans celle du Saint-Pere avec autant de confiance que cette enfant!

Votre don En BELGIQUE: 196-0093341-82 Aide a l'Egilse en Detresso - 46, rue Joseph Vrindis. 4020 LIEGE - Tol. 041:41.39.53. 54 vous desirez obtenir un dégrévement Recal (pour tout don de 1,000 FB et plus), veuillez verser votre don a notre Œuvre Rusie AIDE ET ES-POIR A.S.B.L., 3180 Westerto, au compte 196-0135761-16. Dos dons moindres su courant de la même année peuvent être additionnés jusqu's to somme de 1,000 FB et plus po obtenir to même attestation. Au LUXEM-BOURG CCP 26184-04 KIN/OPH. Oevelsedreef 1. 8-3180 WESTERLO - Tel. 00 32 14-54 40 54 . Nous vous demandons de bien vouloir mentionner votre numéro de bientaileur lors de toute correspondance, versament ou changement d'adresse. Rédaction: KIN Internal. Informationsdienst, KO-NIGSTEIN Doutschland . Ed. 100p.: W. Van Stration, o. proem., Postfach 1209, D-6240 KÖNIGSTEIN 1 - Pour la Belgique: Develoedreef 1. 8-3180 WESTERLO - Ab. 6 no: 36 FB -35 LF Do licentia competentia auctoritatio

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### CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN RABBIS



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Rabbi H.I. Grunewald, 36 Monarch Court, Lyttelton Rd, London N2, Phone 01-455-0811 To His Eminence Pope John Paul II

Greetings of Peace!

The Jewish communities of Europe and beyond have been profoundly troubled by the news of the installation of a Carmelite convent on the site of the Auschwitz extermination camp.

We cannot but deem it utterly incongruent to sanctify ground which is desecrated and accursed, drenched with the blood of millions of victims brutally tormented and slaughtered in history's greatest genocide. The very word Auschwitz has become synonymous with the Holocaust, and to have this place of infinite inhumanity serve as a religious shrine would cause affront and agony, particularly to the survivors of that infamous camp and their families.

When some years ago it was proposed to erect a Jewish monument there, the project was turned down on the grounds that there should be no specific reference in any edifice to one particular religious faith, although over half of the four million Auschwitz martyrs were Jews, murdered for the sole reason that they were Jewish. Surely, then, the objection should be all the greater to a building dedicated to another faith, especially such as was professed by most of the Nazi murderers.

In our grave disquiet, and striving to heal rather than to re-open the wounds of the past, we therefore urgently plead as the Presidium of European Rabbis for the abandonment of this project.

With salutations of profound respect,

Chief Rabbi Sir Immanuel Jakobovits (Britain)

Grand Rabbin René-Samuel Sirat (France)

Grand Rabbin Max Warschawski (Strasbourg)

Rabbi Mordechai Piron (Zurich)

Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen (Rumania)

1.0.

March, 1986

[ Note 5. de har. 28, vie for lett coiss Rona ]

19 mars 1986

LETTRE nº 52

### A toutes les communautés

Chères soeurs.

Je viens partager avec vous mon souci, qui est déjà peut-être le vôtre. C'est au sujet du couvent de Carmélites contemplatives qu'on veut construire à Auschwitz, en Pologne. Il est probable que ce projet aboutira et il me semble que, comme Soeurs de Sion, nous devons être au courant de tout ce qui est en jeu et réfléchir ensemble. Voici d'ubord en que j'ni retenu de l'information reque jusqu'à présent.

Dix Carmélites, toutes polonaises, vivent depuis la fin de 1984 sur le site de ce qui devait être le théâtre municipal d'Auschwitz et qui a été utilisé pour entreposer le gaz toxique servant à exterminer les prisonniers de cet horrible camp de la mort. Ce Carmel a passé inaperçu jusqu'à une date récente. Pendant la visite du Pape au Benelux, en mai 1985, l'organisation catholique "Aide à toute détresse" a récolté une somme de 150.000 dollars pour construire un Carmel sur le lieu où sont morts des millions d'êtres humains. Le tract destiné à recueillir les fonds était rédigé en des termes inquiétants: le couvent doit être "le signe sacré de l'amour, de la paix et de la réconciliation, qui témoignera de la puissance victorieuse de la Croix de Jésus. Le couvent deviendra une forteresse spirituelle, un gage de la conversion des frères égarés de nos pays." leur expliquant à la fois notre anxiété et notre regret devant ce projet.

Toutes ensemble, nous pouvons porter cela devant Dieu, prier pour qu'une solution soit trouvée par-delà les polémiques, pour que les relations entre chrétiens et juifs n'aient pas à en souffrir et pour que ne soient pas blessés davantage ceux qui ont déjà trop souffert. Notre vocation n'en demande pas moins. Les Constitutions affirment avec force que nous avons à Sion

"... la responsabilité particulière de promouvoir compréhension et justice à l'égard de la communauté juive".

art 14

Affectueusement.

5. Kay MacDonald, nds supérieure générale THE CARMELITE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ

DRAFT BACKGROUNDER

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

by

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

JUDITH H. BANKI Associate Director Interreligious Affairs Department American Jewish Committee

February 20, 1986

The installation of a "Carmel" --- convent of Carmelite nuns -- at Auschwitz has created a considerable controversy in parts of Europe. The story has surfaced in the United States as well, and since it has aroused impassioned feelings and touched a variety of religious, ethnic and national nerve endings, this controversy has potentially explosive consequences for interreligious and intergroup relations in the United States.

This background memorandum, based in part on information provided by AJC's European office, will endeavor to present the facts of the situation -- as presently known -- and to offer a framework for discussion of this extremely volatile subject.

### I. Origins and Initiatives for the Convent

According to an interview reported in <u>Regards</u>, (a periodical of the Brussels Jewish community) the Pope, when he was still bishop of Cracow, hoped to establish a place for prayers within the Auschwitz camp. At that time it was impossible. However, the idea was later taken up by the Carmelites of Cracow and in 1984, after long discussions with the Polish government, they obtained authorization to install themselves in a building situated on the outer border of the camp. (The building was intended to be a theater, but was never used as such; it was used as a depot for supplies, mainly the poison gas used in the death chambers.) At present, ten Carmelite nuns (some reports say eight) are living in the building, which is being restored.

### II. "Aid to the Church in Distress"

Among the groups which have undertaken to raise funds for the restoration of the building is the Belgian branch of an organization called, "Aid to the Church in Distress". The organization has distributed fund-raising literature on behalf of the convent which has drawn the objections of Christians and Jews alike. In an unusual move, the Christian members of the Amitie Judeo-Chrétienne (Jewish-Christian Friendship Society) of France, issued a statement on January 8, 1986, strongly criticizing the fund-raising tract. They found "inacceptable" the following excerpts (emphasis theirs): "The Carmelites do penance for us who are still alive. They build with their hands the sacred sign...which will witness the victorious power of the Cross of Jesus. The convent will become a spiritual fortress, a token of the conversion of brothers from various countries who went astray, a sign of good will to erase the outrage of which the Vicar of Christ is so often the object..."

The Christians of the Amitie note that the word, "Jew" does not appear; the text, they charge, reveals "a triumphalism of the Church that we thought Vatican Council II had ended." Once again, they suggested, the Church was acting as if it could substitute for the Jewish people. Moreover, they wondered what "outrage" against the Pope was intended by the tract. In sum, they declared themselves "unable to accept the implantation of this Carmel, whatever the intentions that inspired it."

Similar criticism--both of the language used in the fund-raising literature and, to a lesser degree, of the installation of the convent itself--has come from a variety of other Christian sources, ranging from members of the Roman Catholic hierarchy to practicing Catholic and Protestant laypersons. Thus, on December 6, 1985, Cardinal Decourtray of Lyons, France, declared:

"For me, the Nazi barbarism that descended on Auschwitz descended first and foremost on the Jewish people, even if there were others than Jews at Auschwitz. For world opinion and for myself, it is the attempt to totally exterminate the Jews that we call the Shoah, of which Auschwitz is the symbol. Such affliction and suffering has conferred on the Jewish people, through its martyrs, a particular dignity that is quite properly its own. And to construct a convent at Auschwitz would, for me, impinge upon that dignity. For my part, I would do everything to maintain that respect for the Jewish people everywhere, and certainly at Auschwitz."

The cardinal's statement was almost identical to one issued the day before by six well known French Catholic intellectuals; The declaration by the latter concluded:

"Belonging to a country which harbors the second largest Jewish community of Europe, we are aware that there has been a lack of moral reflection on the Shoah...We call upon Christians to gauge the depth of the discussion that we must undertake, one which makes even more urgent our relations, on the profoundest level, with the Jews. Such an encounter could open a path to a true dialogue, unencumbered by dreaded misunderstandings."

The need for more Christian theological reflection on the Holocaust was also a major theme of the previously-cited statement by Christians of the Amitie of France. They asked:

"If a genuine process of repentence toward the Jewish people, taking account of all of Christian history, had been undertaken by the Church and diffused through the conscience of Christians, could such an initiative have taken place? Does it not demonstrate the lack of theological and moral reflection on the Shoah during these past years?"

According to the Belgian publication, <u>Regards</u>, Cardinal Lustiger, Archbishop of Paris, shared these sentiments and stood ready to communicate them to Cardinal Macharski of Cracow (whose diocese includes Auschwitz) at a forthcoming meeting in Rome.

In Brussels, Canon Wilfried Brieven, a spokesman for the Belgian Primate, Godfried Cardinal Danneels, said the bishops of Belgium and the Netherlands were never consulted about the fund-raising appeal and were "not very happy" about the effort begun by the group.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore clear that this is not an issue which has divided Christians and Jews strictly along religious lines. The great majority of Jewish voices raised on the subject and a number of Christians as well have objected to the idea of a convent on the border of the Auschwitz camp. A number of other Christians find the tract material of Aid to the Church in Distress offensive, but not the convent itself. Thus far, only one instance has surfaced of Jewish opinion which considers the furor over the convent "misdirected." But it seems evident that the fracas over the establishment of the Carmel at Auschwitz masks a very profound struggle over the question of how the Holocaust will be understood by future generations, and whether the Christian roots of anti-Semitism will be systematically acknowledged at the highest levels of the Church.

At the risk of oversimplifying a complex and many-faceted situation, we have tried to piece together from a variety of sources a characteristic Jewish and a characteristic Catholic perspective on the question of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz.

### III. A Jewish Perspective

"On our planet of blood and death, certain places have dearly earned their right to serenity. Earth which has become sacred, such places escape. by some tacit understanding, the turmult of our times. Auschwitz is without doubt one of these. Who would wish to intrude on the largest cemetery in the world: four million dead"..."Auschwitz...is above all a symbol: that of an absolute crime. It has become by itself, by its very essence one might say, a sanctuary, a holy place where anyone may come to learn or to remember, to cry or to pray. But it belongs to no one. Therefore, a convent for whom? In the name of what? Those who rest there are from every country, of every opinion (including those who had none) of every religion or none. No one has rights over these dead." 4 This response is somewhat typical in combining a sense of helplessness at the enormity of the crimes at Auschwitz with suspicions as to the motives and intentions for establishing the convent. At one end is the fear that the specific genocide against Jews for no other reason than that they were Jews will get subsumed under vague descriptions of "man's inhumanity to man..." While almost a million and a half non-Jews died there, Auschwitz saw the murder of almost three million Jews. There were other death camps, but Auschwitz summarizes and symbolizes them all. The name has a special significance for Jews.

The fear that the Church wishes to appropriate this symbol for itself could hardly be assuaged by the "Aid to the Church in Distress" tracts. To refer to the "victorious power of the cross..." where the ashes of three million Jews rest is insensitive at best, to refer to the "conversion of our brothers who have gone astray" seems particularly inappropriate for those who ended at Auschwitz. Questioned about the meaning of the phrase "outrages so often committed against the Vicar of Christ," Fr. Wilfried van Straaten,

founder of Aid to The Church in Distress, said it referred to those who opposed the Pope's visit in Belgium and Holland. If so, what has that to do with Auschwitz?

Catholics seem unable to understand how objectionable it is to Jews when they use a Jewish convert to Christianity as a symbol of Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Both Pope John Paul II during his visit to Auschwitz and Cardinal Franciscus Macharkski in "A Polish Response to Nostra Aetate" invoked the name of Edith Stein; hers was the only "Jewish" name mentioned by either church leader.

AMERICAN IEWISH

Cardinal Marcharski's Nostra Aetate remarks point to another problem for Jews: while that statement acknowledges the great spiritual heritage common to Christians and Jews and calls for mutual knowledge and respect, it nowhere acknowledges any aspect of traditional anti-Jewish teachings and traditions. There is a glossing over the deep heritage of teachings of contempt which have been both acknowledged and regretted by a number of episcopal conferences, including the German, French, Belgian and Swiss bishops, among others.

Aside from what has been perceived as foot-dragging in confessing the Christian roots of anti-Semitism, the controversy over the Carmel at Auschwitz points to more painful questions regarding how the Holocaust will be understood by future generations. Is this part of a deliberate effort to de-Judaize its history?

### FOOTNOTES:

1. Fathers: Jean Dujardin, Bernard Dupuy, Michel Riquet

Sister: Soeur Louise-Marie Niesz

Laypersons: G. Ribiere, M. P. Pierrard

2. New York Times, January 31, 1986

3. The Jewish Week, February 7, 1968 - page 22

4. Editorial, Regards, December 19/January 8, 1985/6

AMERICAN JEWISH
A R C H I V E S



### JOURNAL OF ECUMENICAL STUDIES.

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Leonard Swidler, Editor

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Nancy Krody, Managing Editor

March 3, 1986

TO: Gerhard Riegner, Henry Siegman, David Gordis, Marc Tanenbaum, James Rudin, Theodore Freedman, Leon Klenicki, Annette Daum, Jacqueline Wexler, Eugene Fisher, John Pawlikowski, Elie Wiesel, Cardinal John Krol, Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, Pope John Paul II

FROM: Leonard Swidler

RE: Auschwitz

ARCHIVES

I would like to call your attention to the positive suggestion of my colleague, Professor Zalman Schachter (from the Philadelphia <u>Inquirer</u>) concerning the adding of a Jewish memorial presence at Auschwitz. I believe it is a creative idea and stand ready to do whatever I can to facilitate it. (Also enclosed is a column by a local <u>Inquirer</u> executive with a similar suggestion—which generated a number of letters to the editor on the topic.)

LS/nek encl.

## The proposed convent near Auschwitz

By Claude Lewis Inquirer Editorial Board

I am not a religious man, but I have religious interests. And I am appalled by the controversy surrounding the creation of a convent near the site of . the Auschwitz death camp in southern Poland.

Some Jewish groups in America and in Western Europe are charging , memorial to the Holocaust of the that the convent is an "affront" to , Jews. We don't want it being perpetukilled by the Nazis at Auschwitz.

Those Jewish groups are demand. Despite the presence of a convent. ing that Auschwitz be preserved as a monument to the mass killing of Jews. The establishment of a convent so close by, they argue, "insults" the memory of the Jews who died there.

How can a convent insult anybody's memory? As I understand it. about 2.25 million Jews and about 1.5 million non-Jews, mostly Polish Catholics, perished at the camp,

Israel Singer, secretary general of the World Jewish Congress, issued a stunning statement concerning the controversy:

"We are not seeking a confrontation with the church," he said: "We have no objection to a convent a mile or so from the camp. But we don't want it right there very close and visible. Auschwitz was mainly a Jewish death camp."

Why is that fact significant? That anyone was wantonly and systematically murdered there should be an "affront" to the whole world. Any religious group that wants to establish a new religious order at the site of an old evil, should receive the support of all religious groups. An argument of this kind seems to me to ... convent at the site of the Dachau diminish the meaning of religion.

Another Jewish spokesman, Marus Pardes, the president of the Codinating Committee of Jewish Or-. vizations in Belgium, which has the protests in Europe, said: "We nt to keep Auschwitz as an eternal



... like the holy places in Jerusalem."

near the site of Auschwitz, history, will ensure that the Jewish experience at the camp will never be for-

"Never Again," is the watchword around the world among Jews. A convent near Auschwitz will in no way undermine Jewish determination not to let the world forget the atrocities practiced against them. But Jews should recognize, too, that non-Jews were murdered at Auschwitz and other camps as well.

Orchestrated murder has not been the sole experience of Jews. And a reminder of this fact would, in my view, strengthen the resolve among all people to fight against future holocausts.

Since 1984, about 10 Carmelite nuns have been living near Auschwitz in an unused theater that is , serving as a convent. The presence of the Carmelite nuns, who devote their lives to prayer and contemplation and have virtually no contact with the outside world, should hardly be offensive.

This same order of nuns founded a concentration camp in Germany almost 40 years ago. Despite that fact, whenever Dachau is mentioned, people recall the murder of Jews. A convent nearby will never change history or dilute the consciousness concerning Jews who perished.

A Catholic spokesman was correct when he argued that "there is never anything wrong with prayer." The nuns will be praying against all forms of human depravity, including those aimed at Jews, I have to assume that God will not reject the prayers of nuns near a former concentration camp because they are Catholic.

Bu; there is another issue. A public fight between Catholics and Jews the memory of the Jews who were ally fought over by rival religions over the location of a convent, should be an "affront" to every de-, comed. Maybe that's why so many cent individual. I should think that these two great religions should be. able to quietly iron out any differ-

> What if the nuns refuse to move away? Will Jewish organizations force them out? Will the nuns be harassed and abused? Religious rivalry should be a contradiction in terms.

> A convent or a synagogue anywhere should be supported by every religious group because the world is as much in need of prayer as ever. What's to stop the world Jewish community from establishing a Jewish center or synagogue near Auschwitz to promote its interests and sustain its memory of the hateful Holocaust?

> Art I being naive in suggesting that the two relgions should get together to work out their differences? Catholics and Jews fighting over a camp designed to annihilate a huge portion of humanity should be an insult to everyone. All religion is demeaned when religious leaders engage in petty public squabbles.

I could be wrong but it seems to mea compromise would seem to be the way out of this situation. To do otherwise is to turn even more people, Jews, Catholics and others, away from religious involvement. I thought the one place where sanity, tolerance and respect for others existed was in the religious commu-

nity. I thought that's what religion is all about.

In a world filled with hatred, intolerance, abuse and pettiness, the need for new convents, synagogues and other religious institutions seems obvious.

I thought religion was about worship and God, not segregated eternal memorials. I've found that too many religions are so restrictive and selfcentered that even God is not wel-, people have lost faith.

### Auschwitz convent

# Toward a loving, healed cosmo

To the Editor:

In 1976 I visited Oswiecim, Poland (Auschwitz). I felt the need to spend some time there in the town where my grandfather had served as shohet (religious kosher slaughterer), where my father had been born and where he took me as a young child to show me off to his side of the family.

The kaddish (prayer) I said at the site of the ovens seemed so puny in relation to the outcry hanging in the air. The pall over Auschwitz is dense - not from the climate, but from the untold numbers of souls that are still earthbound and in need of the special help that calls for a religion's arsenal of after-life strategies. These have not yet been offered.

The Carmelite sisters are intending to establish a house at Auschwitz where they will devote themselves to reparative prayer, to sorrow and penance -

to aid the process of healing the gaping and still festering wound. at the site. They are prepared to play their role in the healing process.

Rabbi Isaac Luria the great Kabbalist speaks of the sparks that await redemption so that the messiah's advent can be hastened. There are some people who feel the calling to spend time fasting, praying, meditating in order to create settings for the still brilliant sparks of souls to be raised to their place in a healed cosmos. The sisters' intentions seem to be an expression of their Lurianic idea.

As Jews we should be inspired by the intention of the Carmelites and make our own parallel move. In a union of shared concern for the planet, Jews and Christians could pray there. It would be more constructive to invest the energy now being

used to oppose the Sisters of Carmel in instead establishing a veshivah (a place of study) devoted to mourning, contemplation and prayer. In such a place, the writings of the holy rebbe of Piaestzno, among others, could be studied. He wrote during the dark years of 1940-43, while imprisoned in the Warsaw ghetto. These writings were discovered buried in the rubble of the ghetto after the war and were published by his brother in Israel.

Perhaps in such a place people could learn how to make God's presence more clearly manifest in the world through their devotion to study and meditation.

I believe that the moral fallout from communities like those that I describe could be of great help in making the world a more peaceful loving place.

Rabbi Zalman Schachter Philadelphia.

### International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations

A TO TRY WAY

### memorandum

to:

MEMBERS OF IJCIC

from:

Leon A. Feldman

subject Proposal to establish Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz

date:

March 4, 1986

In connection with the recent developments involving the proposal to erect a Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz, I should like to bring the following background and other relevant information to your attention.

The background is briefly as follows: (Drawn from resources which have been published and from my conversation with Prof. Dr. Clemens Thoma, Director of the Institute of Jüdish-Christliche Forschung of the Theological Faculty, Lucern, Switzerland).

A Polish Catholic Priest, Father Maximilian Kolbe offered himself for death in the hunger bunker for another Christian. Apparently, during the Nazi occupation in or near Cracow, in retaliation for one or several German officers who were assassinated by the underground, a number of people were rounded up to be shot. One of the individuals begged for his life being a family man, Kolbe stepped in to replace that individual. Kolbe was later beatified.

Pope John Paul II on his visit to Auschwitz on June 7, 1979 praised that act by Kolbe "in this site that brought death to four million people of different nations..."

The other person was Edith Stein. Born in Breslau of a Jewish family with an orthodox background, she eventually became assistant to Professor Edmund Husserl (founder of Phenomenology) at the University of Freiburg, where she earned her Ph.D. in 1917. In 1922 she converted to Catholicism and subsequently devoted herself to teaching, lecturing and writing. In 1932 she was offered a professorship in Philosophy at the University of Muenster. When the Nazis came to power, her activities were curtailed being a non-Arian, but she was able to enter the Carmelite Convent in Cologne, taking the name Teresa Benedicta of the Cross.

In 1939 she transferred to the Carmelite House in Echt (Holland) to avoid causing trouble for the Cologne Carmelites and to escape the Nazis. In 1942, the Dutch bishops issued a pastoral letter denouncing Nazi persecution of Jews. In reprisals the Nazis rounded up more than one thousand Jewish Catholics - laypeople, nuns and priests - and shipped them to concentration camps. She was among them and died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz on August 9, 1942.

There is also a different version of how Edith Stein came to Auschwitz but I have been unable to check the facts: While still assistant to Professor Husserl, she had prepared a memorandum about the situation of the Jews in Germany under the Nazis, which she submitted to the the Papal Nuncio Cardinal Pacelli (later Pope Pius XII) during a visit to Freiburg, requesting the Pope to issue a condemnation of Nazi atrocities against Jews. This document was accepted by Pacelli but, apparently, did nothing. He was of the opinion, as he explained later as Pope, that such a statement by the Pope would be harmful and counterproductive. This document was found in the Vatican archives.

Later when Edith Stein was in the Carmelite Convent in Cologne, preparations were made to spirit her out of Germany to a convent in Latin America. This plan was intercepted and she was taken as a Jew to Auschwitz, where she met her death.

There are efforts, already started in 1962 in Cologne, and introduced in Rome more than 10 years ago, to have Edith Stein canonized. This request has been under consideration in the Vatican. The greatest push for her beatification has been undertaken by the Edith Stein Guild, located at the Our Lady of Victory Church, 60 William Street, New York, N.Y. 10005.

The World Jewish Congress at its Plenary Assembly held in Jerusalem, adopted the following resolution in this matter:

The WJC calls on the Carmelites to desist from the proposed construction of a Carmelite convent on the grounds of Auschwitz. The ground of Auschwitz has been hallowed by the blood of many martyrs of all faiths, including that of millions of our fellow Jews.

The WJC believes that no one group or faith should establish itself on this ground. Such an action, however, well-intentioned, would create profound anguish, misunderstanding and resentment at a place for the Jewish people will forever symbolize the tragedy of Shoah, and urges Catholics everywhere to join in this appeal.

It should be noted that Belgian Jews were the first to learn of the convent when fundraising efforts for the project were organized by a group called "Help to the Church in Distress", which works for the Roman Catholic Church in communist countries.

The Brussels evening newspaper <u>Le Soir</u>, quoting literature for the fundraising appeal, reported that the convent would symbolize "love, peace, and reconciliation, witnessing the victorious power of the Cross of Jesus. It will become a spiritual fortress and the proof of the conversion of apostates and those who went astray in various countries."

In Geneva, the president of the International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Siegel, has written to Sister Sheila Sedawie of the Sisters of Zion asking that placing a convent in Auschwitz be prevented.

Mrs. Siegel further stated: "We feel this way not only because of the martyrdom of millions of Jewish children, women and men, but also because their martyrdom was shared by millions of human beings having various beliefs and creeds.

She added: we believe that the grounds of Auschwitz belong to all who were massacred there and that, therefore, no one group should establish itself on this hallowed ground. Were this to happen, the action, however, laudable in its aims, would create much misunderstanding and resentment.

The WJC meanwhile made representations to the Polish government which has promised to intervene with church officials regarding the plan.

Enclosed is also a newsitem which appeared in the NC News Service, dated February 21, 1986 which is headed "Cardinal Defends Establishing Convent near Site of Nazi Death Camp." The rest of the article is self-explanatory.



-- I should like to add that Sister Sedawie was among the Catholic delegation to the IJCIC-Vatican Liaison Committee and audience with the Pope on October 28, 1985. I had occasion to meet her again when I conducted a study day in Rome on December 15, 1985, under auspices of SIDIC (Service International de Documentation Judeo-Chretienne). --

CCNVENT Feb. 21, 1986 (660 words)

CARDINAL DEFENDS ESTABLISHING CONVENT NEAR SITE OF NAZI DEATH CAMP

By John Thavis

NC News Service

Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Cracow, Poland, has defended the establishment of a Carmelite convent at the site of the Auschwitz extermination camp.

The placement of the convent in a former theater outside the World War II Nazi camp and a fund-raising campaign for its renovation have drawn protests from some Jewish groups.

In a sermon published in the Feb. 20 edition of the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano, Cardinal Macharski said the presence of cloistered Carmelite nuns near the barracks and gas chambers of Auschwitz is a symbol of the church's response to the tragedy that occurred there.

"The former camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau is in a certain sense a new 'sacred place' that belongs without distinction to all humanity and to every people," the cardinal said.

An estimated 4 million people, about 90 percent of them Jews, were killed in the Nazi camp during Germany's occupation of Poland during World War II.

A coalition of Jewish groups in Belgium, among others, has called "intolerable" the convent's establishment in a place so important in the Jewish Holocaust.

Joseph Lichten, a representative of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Rome, said other groups have questioned why a convent must be built as a "symbol," since Auschwitz is already a symbol for all those who suffered there.

A Vatican source familiar with the issue said no Jewish groups were consulted before the convent was set up in 1984.

"Perhaps this was a mistake," said the Vatican source, who asked not to be identified.

The Coordinating Committee of Jewish Organizations in Belgium said recently in a statement that Auschwitz should be an eternal memorial to the Jewish Holocaust. The statement said that Auschwitz should not be fought over by rival religions like the holy places in Jerusalem.

Lichten said a fund-raising campaign initiated during Pope John Paul II's trip to Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg in May 1985 brought the controversy to a head.

A letter from the Catholic European fund-raising group, "Aid to the Church in Distress," referred to the Auschwitz convent as "a spiritual fortress and a guarantee of the conversion of strayed brothers from our countries as well as proof of our desire to erase outrages so often done to the Vicar of Christ."

"Was it neccessary to speak of conversion here?" Lichten asked.

Some Catholic leaders in Europe have criticized the language of the fund-raising appeal as contrary to the ecumenical spirit of the Second Vatican Council.

Cardinal Albert Decourtray of Lyon, France, has called the fund-raising project "disconcerting." He said Auschwitz would always remain "a reminder of the Shoah, that is to say, the attempt to exterminate Jews because they are Jews."

A spokesman for Cardinal Godfried Danneels of Malines-Brussels, Belgium, said the bishops of Belgium and the Netherlands were not consulted about the fund raising and were "not very happy" about the campaign.

The Cracow Archdiocese received government permission in 1984 to establish the convent in the unused theater, which also served as a warehouse. Much of the camp is a state museum.

"The spiritual greatness of the decision by these religious women should be recognized objectively," Cardinal Macharski said in his sermon, given Jan. 14 at Auschwitz. "Their presence will serve to demonstrate that love is possible, that it is stronger than evil."

Cardinal Macharski said the women dedicated themselves "to prayer and expiatory self-sacrifice for the crimes committed in the camp." He said the convent was part of the church's pastoral duty to remind people of what happened.

He also noted that Carmelite nuns founded a convent at the Dachau concentration camp in Germany nearly 40 years ago, and there had not been objections.

Among Catholic victims at Auschwitz, he said, were St. Maximilian Kolbe, a priest who gave his life for a fellow prisoner and who was canonized in 1982, and Sister Edith Stein, a German Jew who converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun.



European Office 4, rue de la Bienfaisance 75008 Paris Tel. 45.22.92.43 43.87.38.39 Nives E. Fox European Representative

March 27, 1986

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John Slawson Bertram H. Gold Dear Marc:

Enclosed is the report on the meeting, as you requested.

It is very long, but it was faster to do by putting down just about everything that was said.

The first session of the working group took place, with the Alliance, CRIF and Consistory representatives present. Sabine Rojtman was there for CRIF, and told me that it was much a repetition of the Sunday meeting, perhaps more inconclusive. A draft paper is coming out of it, outlining the position as it were; but she did not think it would be very impressive. Eventually we shall have a copy of it.

Theo Klein told Tullia Zevi what was agreed to at the meeting of the 23rd, adding that if nothing of import came of the visit to the synagogue Jewish reaction will be very cool indeed.

An appointment was requested here to meet with Cardinal Glemp during his visit to Paris, April 11.

Finally, CRIF would appreciate hearing about any steps taken in the US over the Carmel problem and anything else you think it is appropriate to share.

It was nice to see you and I hope you made that plane on Monday without trouble. I realized after I left you at the hotel that it was awfully late.

With very best regards,

As ever,

Nives Fox

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum American Jewish Committee 165 East 56 Street New York, N.Y. 10022



### JCRC BACKGROUNDER

The Auschwitz State Museum of Poland in conjunction with the International Auschwitz Committee have brought to the United Nations an exhibit entitled, "Auschwitz - A Crime Agaisnt Mankind." Prior to the opening of the exhibit concerns were expressed by survivor groups and others that it would not accurately depict the horrors suffered at Auschwitz-Birkenau, nor reflect the colossal tragedy that befell the 3 million Jews annihilated at the death camp. However, changes recommended by the American Gathering and the Federation of Jewish Holocaust Survivors have resulted in a more authentic portrayal of Auschwitz; a marked improvement over the existing permanent museum in Oswiecim, Poland.

The exhibit will be on display in the main pavilion of the United Nations until January 27, 1986. We encourage you to view it and to urge others to see it, as well. Moreover, we strongly suggest that you invite Jewish and non-Jewish school, youth, civic and senior citizen groups to visit the UN and be exposed to this vivid Holocaust learning experience.

### AUSCHWITZ -- A Chronology of Genocide

April 27, 1940	Auschwitz I (the mother camp) established by order of Reichsfuhrer SS Heinrich Himmler near small town of Oswiecim, Poland.
June, 1941	Himmler orders Camp Commandant Rudolph Hoess to prepare for the "Final Solution" - the systematic mass murder of European Jewry.
September 3, 1941	First use of "Zyklon B" in gas chamber.
October, 1941	Second, larger camp called Birkenau or Auschwitz II is established.
January, 1942	Mass murder of Polish Jews by gassing begins in Birkenau; Auschwitz-Birkenau becomes the largest center of mass extermination of Jews.
March, 1942	Vast majority of new arrivals are Jewish.
March 22, 1942	New gas chambers disguised as shower rooms (holding 1500-2000 people), and four crematoria with a combined capacity for burning 4,456 corpses daily are activated.
March 26, 1942	Transports arrive from Slovakia.
March 30, 1942	Transports arrive from France.
May, 1942	Jewish slave labor camp, Auschwitz III (Monowice), assigned

### JACK D. WEILER CENTER FOR INTERGROUP RELATIONS 111 West 40th Street, Third Floor, New York, NY 10018

to German firm IG-Farben-Werke

"Selektion" initiated for transport arrivals, separating July 4, 1942 out able bodied workers from those marked for immediate death. Slave labor life expectancy limited to no more than nine months. July 17, 1942 Transports arrive from Holland; Himmler supervises "selektion" and gassing. August 5, 1942 Transports arrive from Belgium. August 13, 1942 Transports arrive from Yugoslavia. October 28, 1942 Transports arrive from Bohemia and Moravia (Theresienstadt). December 1, 1942 Transports arrive from Norway. December 10, 1942 Transports arrive from Germany. March 20, 1943 Transports arrive from Greece. October 23, 1943 Transports arrive from Italy. November 5, 1943 Transports arrive from Latvia. December 2, 1943 Transports arrive from Austria. May 17, 1944 Transports arrive from Hungary. Jewish resistance movement destroys a crematorium, killing October 7, 1944 several SS guards. November 2, 1944 "Selektion" and gassing terminates by order of Himmler. November 26, 1944 Order given to destroy the gas chambers and crematoria to erase evidence of mass murder from advancing Allied armies. January 5, 1945 Last transports arrive from Berlin. January 17, 1945 Death marches begin westward as camp is evacuated; thousands perish. January 27, 1945 7,650 inmates liberated by Soviet Army. DEATH TOLL (by gassing, cremation, beating, torture, starvation, disease...): 3,000,000 Jews (approx. 2,250,000 adults and 750,000 children) 1,000,000 non-Jews

4,000,000 victims of Auschwitz

Meeting Auschwitz Carmel May 7 (Alliance)

Roundup action: Jewish community sensitized; press reaction good; Klein's phrase a slogan "sky empty then, must so remain" used by the press; also Steg's speech on Warsaw Ghetto Commemoration occasion. Letter received From Etchegaray and Decourtray. Intervention with Catholic personalities, Glemp visit and request for putting plaint in writing. A three pp letter was sent to him, summarizing our discussion, enclosing Steg's Warsaw Chetto

Rumor that Poland asked Heritage Committee to permit establishment of the convent denied by Hoffemberg at the meeting, who claims the Polish rep at Unesco did not know of the convention. Letter from M'Bow, responding to Hoffemberg, en route, but going through usual approvals. H. insists that only the committee can decide, not Unesco, and it meets end Nov. or beg. December; but its Bureau meets in June

### News:

. . . .

High ranking diplomat(French) went to Vatican and now in Israel -does this bode another step for recognition Israel?

Polish Episcopate meeting in Warsaw these days. Convent problem is on the agenda. The Episcopate did give permissionxwhenx at the time Convent was established

Mattagrin (Cardinal?) who is President of Episcopal Conference in France for Relations with Judaism is in Poland, and his position is favorable to Jewish one. But he is a nice, timid not forceful person.

Willebrands, who kept promising he would go to Warsaw and raise issue, has not gone as yet: excuse, no time

Sisters not ignorant, from Poznam, all bilingual (French). The Mother Superior of the Convent lived in xxxxxxxx the village, very near to Birkenau camp. Claude Lanzman interviewed her for his film for over two hours. Her mother made her pray every day for the terrible things that were going on, and she promised herself at the time that she would continue. She declared (is said to have declared) that if there is a scandal over convent she would prefer to remounce the project.

Macharsky is supposed to have met Dupuy in Paris, If so, Committee was not advised. His questions still why did not Jews complainxkes before; why did IJCIC not complain; Bronfman saw Jaruzelsky and never said anything. In any case, Macharsky is opposed to Canonization Edith Stein, and since Stein is perceived as a Jewand Jews cannot be canonized.

Mrs. Zevi, here for Peres/WJC dinner, April 21 saw Lustiger, one hears; though she said she would try, she did not inform Committee after seeing him re content conversation; or even to say she had an-appointment.

Macharsky sent a long letter to Pt. Int. Council Ch & Jews in Oppenheim, West Germany, Mr. Victor Goldblum. In it he said: Convent small, no more than 22 nuns, and its size and purpose show clearly the care and attention paid to the imprescriptibility of the crimes committed in this largest extermination place of Jews and largest terrain of Polish suffering of torture. The Carmel will be in the shadow of Auschwitz and not overshadow Aushwitz; it will not be consecrated, meaning no cross will be evident on outside; it will have no modification or enlargement, in the camp or with anything related to the Camp; there will be no propaganda, no outside expressions. (Hoffemberg says work in Convent now stopped, housing for sisters

present -- 12 -- finished, but that's it.

Maxcharsky's letter makes some at meeting conclude that there is a softening position in the Polish Church attitude. HEMENEX Dr. Marc Aron, President CRIF Lyons is going to Cracow to meet Macharsky.

(all these activities outside the Committee without checking or informing in advance, plus rumors that Alliance is trying to pull blanket to its own side made Steg declare he was perfectly willing to have Alliance and personal presidency Committee withdrawn.

Belgians will be told about developments.

\* . . .

Cable to Mattagrin suggested (changed to Glemp see below, because of gentleman's "timidity.")

Also suggestion that Lanzman filming mother superiod be viewed.

Any question of why Jews did not complain before should be answered with: we did not know and were not consulted.

Glemp's statement to delegation that saw him was repeated several time, and repetitions were harsher. Information received that Glemp also asked that no photo be taken with the Rabbi of Metz, when he visited that city.

What other action possible? After Episcopal Conference in Warsaw one might have a declaration of all that has been done and sense of low profile and softening of Church position. If Church then denies, this will give chance to start all over again.

Another possible strategy: a) reactivate media, even with false rumors, like Macharsky coming across better, mother Superior's renouncing if trouble; b) a Trip to Rome and mmet Willebrands; c) a group trip to Auschwitz.

(Steg, on passant, says that Min. Culture François Leotard told him after speech ghetto commemoration that he now understood the need for silence, he had not seen the problem this way before.)

Georges Wellers study was translated into Polish; and it is in complete accord with the Director of Polish Auschwitz State Museum.

Sabine Rojtman is for continuing pressure.

Meeting decided on cable to Cardinal Glemp, immediately, and while Episc. Conf. on in Poland. Text: For the sake of Christian/Jewish friendship we express to the Episcopagte our request to move Convent from present site. Auschwitz must remain the symbol of the unspeakable neither words or prayers.

Suggestion if Episcopate Poland says no:
Hoffenberg: a descent to Auschwitz by journalists and television;
a press conference, around May 20
Sabine: US is center of strength, mask action must come from there.
A press conference as suggested not good unless all world organizations leaders make participate, US and Europe. Our group here represents the French Jews only, not enough.
Klarskeld suggests this could be first WJC Europe action
Darmon suggests such a group make representing world Jewry should see pope; but Prof. Amar says Pope has no real authoritymax with Carmelites.

Aside, why does AJC and FSJU come to our meetings?

Last suggestions: write to Mother Superior of Convent. Report her attitude is supposed to have come from ND de Sion sisterwax who contacted the lady.

IMPORTANT: TELL AJC ABOUT ACTIVATING US MEDIA' PEOPLE' ETC.
HOW COME SUBJECT NOT DISCUSSED AT APRIL IJCIC MEETING
IN ROME? (Waxman informs meeting in Rome indeed took
place; was AJC there?)

### International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations

May 19, 1986

Dear IJCIC Member:

AMERICAN SECRETARIAT: Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016 Tel.: (212) 686-8670

EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT: World Jewish Congress 1 Rue de Varembe 1211 Geneve 20, Switzerland. Tel.: (022) 34 13 25

CONSTITUTENT AGENCIES: American Jewish Committee 165 East 56th Street New York, N.Y. 10022

B'nai B'rith 823 United Nations Plaza New York, N.Y. 10017

The Israel Interfaith
Association
P.O.B. 7739
Jerusalem 91.077, Israel

Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016

World Jewish Congress 1 Park Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016

- We are trying to set the date for the next IJCIC meeting. However, so far we have been unable to find a day convenient for most of our members. We will continue trying to contact you to elicit your response for day when we could meet and assure a representative attendance.
- Enclosed you will find the following items of interest:
   a) Memorandum of background information re proposed
   Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz.

b) 'Polemik um ein Kloster in Auschwitz''(from the Allgemeine Jüdische Wochenzeitung, Bonn, May 9, 1986).

- c) "Cardinal defends Auschwitz Convent" (<u>Jewish Week</u>, May 16, 1986) which summarizes response of Cardinal Macharski to a protest by Dr. Victor Goldbloom (Canada) president of the International Council of Christians and Jews.
- d) Letter to the Editor (same issue of <u>Jewish Week</u>) entitled "Interfaith Dialogue" by Brother William J. Martyn, co-director of the Roman-Catholic Dialogue, Archdiocese of New York.
- 3. Response by Dr. Emilio Castro, General Secretary, World Council of Churches, Geneva, dated May 6, 1986, to IJCIC's communication requesting support of the Waldheim investigation by the Secretary General of the United Nations. (The resolution and press release has been previously distributed).
- Request by the Alliance Israelite Universelle, Paris, to be admitted to IJCIC membership. Communication submitted on behalf of the Alliance by Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, dated May 13, 1986.
- 5. The Jewish Advocate (Boston) cover story on recent visit of Cardinal Lustiger (May 8, 1986).

Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman Chairman

Dr. Leon A. Feldman Consultant

### International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations

### memorandum

to:

Members of IJCIC

from:

Leon A. Feldman

subject: Proposed Convent at Auschwitz

date:

May 19, 1986

You will recall that we have sent you background material about the proposed Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz as well as press coverage - pro and con - in various languages. We regret that todate no organized campaign has been launched in protest of said Convent. As time progresses and little has been undertaken from our side, we will lose - I mean the Jewish community the world over and the national and international Jewish organizations, both religious and political - by default. It is true that several Jewish organizations have issued statements in protest, of which copies have been distributed, and that contacts have been arranged with several bishops, including those of Boston, Chicago, etc., The Synagogue Council has circulated our background material to several of its committees and rabbis, otherwise, at least to our knowledge, little else has been undertaken on the national and local level. We have also communicated our protest to the Archbishop of Cracow with a copy to Johannes Cardinal Willebrands; so far these have been unanswered.

We should like to reiterate some background information for the understanding of that which has been said above. It is based on a recent summary article which appeared in the Allgemeine Judische Wochenzeitung (Bonn).

In recent months voices have been heard which foreshadow tension between Jewish organizations and several Catholic Church groups. The controversy arose as a result of the announcement by the Polish Catholic Church of plans to establish a Carmelite Convent at the former infamous extermination camp at Auschwitz. The Archbishop of Cracow, Franciszak Cardinal Macharski, whose diocese extends to Auschwitz, welcomes the presence of the Carmelite nuns on that locale of suffering with the explanation that "love is possible and even stronger than evil."

Opposition to this proposal was voiced by several Jewish organizations here and abroad, including groups of Jewish survivors of Auschwitz, and has been supported by various Chrsitian bodies as well as by Jewish-Christian Fellowships, primarily in Belgium and France. Several prominent church leaders have joined in the protest, while Cardinal Lustiger has so far remained silent, even though his mother was killed in Auschwitz. The Conference of European Rabbis protested to the Pope, himself of Polish birth, that the establishment of such a convent on the territory which is soaked and sanctified by the blood of millions of Jews, would be regarded as a desecration and a course. In their request to the Pope, the rabbis stated further that, according to Jewish religious law, it is not allowed to erect a church on a Jewish cemetery, and Auschwitz is a sanctified Jewish burial place, and urged him to prevent the planned undertaking. Besides the serious religious reservations, Jews also fear that, through the establishment of the Carmelite Convent, the Catholic Church would consider the enclave of the former extermination camp as its own domain, which has become synonymous with the "Final Solution" and the elimination of the Jewish people from this earth.

This grave concern is not without foundation. Father Werenfried van Straaten, who heads the group which actively supports the project and collects funds for it in Belgium and France, stated that he could not fathom the reasons for the Jewish opposition and denies the exclusive Jewish claim on Auschwitz, After all, so van Straaten, also gypsies, Polish Catholics, and Russian prisoners of war lost their lives at Auschwitz concentration camp. Obviously, one should be reminded, that a country like Poland, the history of which is far from being favorably disposed towards Jews - in pre-war times and during the second World War, and during the post-war period - such a claim is far from being realistic. Furthermore, one should be reminded, for example, that last year the Polish authorities turned down a request to erect a Jewish memorial monument on the grounds of the former extermination camp, without even offering an explanation.

Another point which concerns Jews is the intention of the Church sponsors to single out for honors through the establishment of the Convent, two of its in Auschwitz murdered martyrs, one has already been beatified, while the effort to have sainthood bestowed upon the other, is in progress.

The Carmelite nun, Edith Stein, born in Germany of a Jewish family, who taught philosophy and converted rather late in her career to Catholicism, expressed in her writings until before her death old anti-Jewish prejudices, including that the Shoah is divine punishment of the Jews. By the way, her writings are still being published under Catholic Church imprimatur.

The Polish Franciscan Maksymilian Kolbe was the author during the period of the two world wars of anti-semitic tracts, which helped to stimulate the hateful atmosphere in Poland during which Catholic clergy warned their faithful not to buy "from Jews". His activities follow the line of the anti-semitic rabble-rousers as Father Stanislaw Trzeciakow and Jan Postworowski, who laid the ideological foundations of Catholic anti-semitism, pogroms etc and advocated the elimination of of Jews from public life, higher educational institutions, and the economy.

# [start] AMERICAN JEWISH Original documents faded and/or illegible

### Alte Wunden drohen aufzubrechen

Polemik um ein Kloster in Auschwitz / Von Martin Pollack

"Warum greifen wir heute das jüdische Problem auf?", fragte die in Krakau erschel- Jan Rostworowski, der die ideologischen Grundnende katholische Monatszeitschrift "Znak" (Zelchen) im Editorial zu einer mehr als fünfhundert Seiten starken Sondernummer, die dem katholisch-jüdischen Dialog und der geschichtlichen Rolle der Juden in Polen gewidmet war. Die Antwort, wenige Zeilen weiter, lautete tröstlich: "Weil es nötig ist, das nationale oder gesellschaftliche Gewissen zu erforschen und die alten Wunden zu reinigen, damlt diese verhellen können." Seit dem Erscheinen dieser Nummer im Frühjahr 1983 hat sich im polnisch-jüdischen Verhältnis, das nie als problemios gelten konnte, tatsächlich manches zum Besseren verändert. Das ist nicht zuletzt den Bemühungen katholischer Kreise zu verdanken, die sich mit viel Einfühlsamkelt dieser Problematik näherten.

einer Versöhnung zwischen Juden und Polen jekt kräftig unterstützt, in einer aufgebrachten könnten nun ins Stocken geraten. Das läßt jedenfalls eine Polemik befürchten, die in diesen schen Proteste nicht verstehen und lehne den Wochen zwischen judischen Organisationen und verschiedenen Stellen der katholischen Kirche entbrannt ist. Ausgelöst wurde die Kontroverse durch die Ankundigung der polnischen Kirche, sie woile in unmittelbarer Nähe des ehemaligen Vernichtungslagers Auschwitz ein Kloster des Ordens der "Unbeschuhten Karmelitinnen" einrichten. Der für Auschwitz zuständige Erzbischof von Krakau, Franciszek Kardinal Macharski, wollte die ständige Anwesenheit der Ordensfrauen an dem Ort des Grauens als Hinweis darauf gewertet sehen, duß die Liebe möglich und stärker ist als das Böse".

Gegen die Einrichtung des Klosters erhoben Vertreter des Jüdischen Weltkongresses, jüdischer Opferverbände sowie verschiedener christlich-judischer Vereinigungen vor allem in Belgien und Frankreich geharnischten Protest. Leilende Mitglieder der Konferenz europäischer Rabbiner protestierten in einem Schreiben an den polnischen Papst dagegen, durch den Bau der kirchlichen Buß- und Betstätte den durch das Blut von Millionen jüdischen Opfern .geheiligten Boden" zu "entweihen und zu verfluchen".

Die Rabbiner verwiesen auf die jüdische reliziose Vorschrift, wonach auf einer Begräbnisstätte für Juden keine Kirche errichtet werden fürfe, und baten Johannes Paul II., das Vorhaen zu verhindern. Schwerer als religiöse Belenken dürfte freilich für viele die Befürchtung wiegen, die katholische Kirche könne durch den Closterbau einen Ort für sich in Anspruch nehnen, der als Synonym für die Vernichtung des udischen Volkes in den internationalen Sprachjebrauch eingegangen ist.

ieß der Leiter der Ostpriesterhilfe, Pater Weren-

Diese zaghaften und tastenden Schritte zu fried van Straaten, dessen Organisation das Pro-Stellungnahme verlauten, er könne die jüdiausschließlichen Anspruch des jüdischen Volkes auf Auschwitz ab. Dort seien schließlich auch Zigeuner, polnische Katholiken und russische Kriegsgefangene ermordet worden. Von einem solchen Anspruch der Juden auf Auschwitz kann freilich in einem Land wie Polen, das man beim besten Willen nicht als übermäßig judenfreundlich bezeichnen kann, ohnehin kaum die Rede sein. Man braucht in diesem Zusammenhang nur daran zu erinnern, daß die polnischen Behörden erst im Vorjahr die Errichtung eines judischen Denkmals im ehemaligen Vernichtungslager abgelehnt haben, ohne einen triftigen Grund dafür zu nennen.

Mit durchaus gemischten Gefühlen sehen die Vertreter jüdischer Organisationen auch die Berufung polnischer Kirchenführer auf zwei in Ausdiwitz ermordete Märtyrer, die im Karmel besondere Verehrung genießen sollen. Die deut-sche Philosophin und Karmelitin Edith Stein entstammte einer jüdischen Familie und trat erst relativ spät zum katholischen Glauben über. Bis unmittelbar vor threm Tod formulierte sie in Schriften, die bis heute von der katholischen Kirche publiziert werden, die alten antijudaistischen Vorurteile, indem sie etwa den Holocaust als Gericht Gottes an den Juden deutete. Der polnische Franziskanerpater Maksymilian Kolbe, der in der Zwischenkriegszeit ein-deutig antisemitische Publikationen berausgab, weckt in vielen Juden die Erinnerung an die haßerfüllte Atmosphäre der Zwischenkriegszeit, an die katholischen Priester, die ihre Schäfchen davor warnten, "beim Juden" zu kaufen, an rablate Antisemiten, wie etwa den Prä-Diese Sorge scheint nicht ganz unbegründet. So laten Stanislaw Trzeciakow oder den Priester

lagen des katholischen Antisemitismus entwikkette und für eine "Eliminierung" der Juden aus vielen Bereichen des öffentlichen Lebens eintrat.

Wer die nun in den Protesten gegen den Ausdiwitzer Karmel aufbrechende Verbitterung verstehen möchte, wird die historischen Wurzeln für die tiefe Entfrendung zwischen Juden und Polen suchen müssen. Die Polemik bewegt sich auf einem durch zahllose Ressentiments und Vorurteile vergifteten Boden. Die Polen fühlen, daß man ihnen ein schweres Unrecht zufügt, wenn man ihnen die Verantwortung für den Massenmord, dem sie zum Opfer fielen, auflastet. Und die Juden fühlen sich genauso verletzt, wenn man ihnen die Schuld für Verbrechen gibt, welche die polnische kommunistische Sicherheitspolizei während der Stalinzeit beging, als einige hohe Positionen innerhalb der Terrormaschinerie von Juden bekleidet waren", heißt es in einem Aufrul zur polnisch-jüdischen Aussöhnung, den vor einiger Zeit drei prominente Exilpolen und drei nicht weniger bekannte Juden (darunter Simon Wiesenthal) veröffentlichten. Die Liste der gegenseitigen Beschuldigungen ließe sich ohne Mühe verlängern.

Gewisse Ansätze, die trennenden Gräben zu überbrücken, hat es auch im offiziellen Polen gegeben. So hat etwa vor einigen Jahren die polnische Kommission zur Erforschung des Zweiten Weltkriegs auf Anregung israelischer Kollegen vom Yad Vashem bei der polnischen Akademie der Wissenschaften den Antrag gestellt, eine gemischte Kommission polnischer und istaelischer Historiker ins Leben zu rufen, die sich mit den wichtigsten Problemen der polnisch-judischen Beziehungen in den Jahren nach 1918 beschäftigen soll (es gibt seit Jahren eine ungarisch-israelische und eine rumanisch-israelische gemischte Historikerkommission). Der Antrag wurde his heute nicht einmal einer Antwort gewürdigt.

Die Partei scheint nicht viel davon zu halten, die jüngste Vergangenheit einer vorurteilsfreien Betrachtung auszusetzen. Die katholische Kirche nimmt zwar in der jüdischen Frage eine viel offenere Haltung ein, aber mit der selbstkritischen Darstellung hat auch sie noch Schwierigkeiten. In der genannten Nummer der Zeitschrift "Znak" etwa findet sich unter rund fünfzig Beiträgen über Katholizismus und Judentum in Polen kein einziger über die antisemitische Tra-

dition der Kirche. Ohne diese Auseinandersetzung mit der Vergangenheit, die gewiß nicht schmerzlos sein kann, bleiben aber alle Versöhnungsversuche auf halbem Weg stecken, und brechen bei jeder sich bietenden Gelegenheit wieder die alten, eiternden Wunden auf. Das hat jetzt die Kontroverse um das Kloster in Auschwitz deutlich gezeigt.

### [end]

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### Cardinal defends Auschwitz convent

A controversial convent established near the Auschwitz death camp is not meant to cast a Christian shadow over a place identified with the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews nor reduce the emotional significance to Jews of the death camp, according to the Polish cardinal in whose diocese it is located.

"It is not the camp that exists in the shadow of the Carmel (convent), but rather the Carmel that lives in the shadow of the camp." wrote Francicus Cardinal Macharski in response to a letter from Dr. Victor Goldbloom of Canada, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

Goldbloom, on behalf of the council's executive committee, had written the cardinal to express "concern and apprehension about the development of a large and conspicuous center at a place of such historic and emotional significance."

The National Conference of Christians and Jews, the council's U.S. representative, released the letters.

The cardinal wrote Goldbloom that the small group of nuns (10 at present) would not exceed 22 and that they would devote themselves to reparative prayer, to sorrow and penance to aid the process of healing.

"They live in strict seclusion, are dedicated to prayer for love among nations and believers of various religions in the spirit of expiation for crimes, especially for crimes committed against the Jewish nation," Macharski wrote.

Goldbloom had emphasized that the council's concern was intensified by reports that material related to establishment of the Carmel "refers only to victims without identifying the considerable majority of those victims as having been Jews, persecuted solely and systematically because of their religious heritage."

In recognizing and clarifying that concern, the cardinal said:

"No man who wants to remain in

truth can obliterate the difference distinguishing the martyrology of the Jewish nation of that time, from the martyrology of other nations: Jews were killed for the very fact they had been the Jews.

May 16, 1986

"We wanted only to set a sign reminding what that place was in reality, a live spiritual sign indicating what lesson should be taken from it ... that the history of Auschwitz would be never and nowhere repeated: the alive monument of expiation of crimes done by men of the past, among whom there were those who had been Christians before they clung to the Nazi ideology."

He concluded that, as bishop of the diocese, he would welcome and support "with all my authority" the foundation of a Jewish oratory at the Auschwitz site.

### Interfaith dialogue

I read with interest the Feb. 28 letter by Robert Sugar concerning establishment of the Carmelite convent at the site of Auschwitz. I do not believe that we Roman Catholics could ever forget the Holocaust. The recent visit of Pope John Paul II to the synagogue was a witness to this fact when he said:

I would like once more to express a word of abhorrence for the genocide decreed against the Jewish people during the last war, which led to the Holocaust of million of innocent victims."

The Roman Catholic-Jewish dialogue is young. We have accomplished small steps, and as the Pope recalled, "the path undertaken is still at the beginning, and therefore a considerable amount of time will still be needed."

When the Holy Father said to the Jews in the synagogue as well as the Jews around the world: "You are our dearly beloved brothers, and in a certain way it could be said that you are our elder brothers," it hardly implies any form of superiority.

Brother William J. Martyn Co-Director Roman Catholic-Jewish Dialogue Archdiocese of New York Ish Week, Inc. N

May 16, 1986

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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

GENERAL SECRETARIAT

6 May 1986

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman
Chairman, International Jewish Committee
on Interreligious Consultations
Synagogue Council of America
327 Lexington Avenue
New York, NY 10016, USA

Dear Rabbi Waxman,

Thank you very much for the letter conveying the resolution adopted by the constituent member agencies of the IJCIC on 14th April and also for the copies of the press release and letter of the Synagogue Council of America to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

We regret to note that the resolution was released to the press before we were informed about it.

We have been following with much concern reports about the alleged activities of Mr Kurt Waldheim during the Second World War but we do not have the privilege of access to the sources of your information.

In spite of the seriousness of the charges levelled against Mr Waldheim, and whatever their final outcome may be, we fail to understand how any link could be made between his activities during the War and the policies of the United Nations during the period when he was Secretary-General. Such a link does not conform to our understanding of the role and powers of the Secretary-General or to our assessment of the functioning of the UN and its policies during the period. Nor do we think that a special investigation into the background of high officials of the UN is either warranted or desirable.

We are therefore not in a position to support the call you are making for the enquiry into the Kurt Waldheim era of the United Nations.

With all good wishes,

Yours singerely

General Secretary



institute of Human Relations 165 East 56 Street New York, New York 10022 212 751-4000

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John Slawson Bertram H. Gold May 13, 1986

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, Chairman International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, New York 10016

Dear Mordecai,

During a recent visit to Paris and in subsequent correspondence, Prof. Ady Steg, president of the Alliance Israelite Universelle, has indicated the strong desire of his organization to become a member of IJCIC.

As I understand the French Jewish situation, the Alliance has a long and distinguished history of representing the French Jewish community in its relations with the Catholic Church and with Protestants in that country.

I have discussed the issue with David Gordis, AJC executive vicepresident, and with Leo Nevas, chairman of AJC's International Relations Commission, and they both join me in positive support of the Alliance's application for membership in IJCIC.

This, therefore, is a formal request in behalf of AJC to place the question of the Alliance's proposed membership on the agenda of the next meeting of IJCIC.

With warm personal regards, I am,

Cordially yours,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Director

International Relations Department

MHT: RPR

cc: Prof. Ady Steg Hon. Gerard Israel David Gordis Leo Nevas



# VOCATE

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THURSDAY, MAY 8, 1986

(617) 227-51

erifies Jewish Roots During Boston Visi

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The Jowish leaders, who met with Lustiger at the residence of Baston's Bernaul Cardinal Law, established an immediate relaxed rapport with Lustiger. Though conversation touched on issues of contemporary concern-such as the failure of the Vatican to extend diplomatic recognition to Israel, the Jewish contingent continually returned to the subject of the Cardinal's boyhood conver-

sion and eventual elevation to a powerful position in the Catholic hierarchy.

"There is no question that he is a brother," said Rabbi Richard Yellin of Congregation Mishkan Tefila, one of several rabbis in the Jewish contingent. "Jews have fan-Here is a man who is both a Jew and a Cardinal of the tasized and even written legends about Jewish popes... back 500 years and it unnerved me was transported

The Jewish delegation appeared overwhelmed at times by the intense hundlity of the French Cardinal. Whether offering private insights to the group, or donning vestments to celebrate mass for seminarians at St. John's in the day, Lustiger appeared Brighton, as he did later in devoid of

The Jewish group, which included heads of several from his seat to the right of Lustiger and began serving by the presence of Cardinal Law, who at one point rose coffee to the guests.

Lustiger's mother, along with other family members, was deported and perished at Auschwitz during the Second World War. It is only because Jews are still "offended and Though wary of journalists, Lustiger submitted to an interview with the Advocate following the concelebrated mass in the seminary chapel. He explained that he does not favor speaking publicly about his conversion out of "respect" for the memories of relatives and loved ones. threatened" that he still consents to face inquiring report

hensive interviews about his childhood which was published in 1982 in the Israell daily legical Acharonot.

In one of the most pagnant sections of that interview.

Lustiger recalled when, at the age of 11, his "Bundist" Lustiger refers journalists to one of the few compre

(Continued on Page 24)



(Continued from Page 1)

parents sent him to Germany to study German at the home of a liberal-minded teacher. Even in that atmosphere of freethinking, he said, the children of the household were already devotees of Nazism and talking of "kill-

ing Jews at the summer solstice."
The Jewish child, then called Aaron, after his paternal grandfather, also experienced anti-Semitic beatings and tauntings by French schoolmates. "At the door of my school I was beaten because I was a Jew," he told the Israeli journalists. "For me, at that time, Judaism was a historic condition of persecution."

Humiliation, apparently, was a constant in Lustiger's childhood. "We were poor," he said. "I was not dressed like the other children but I was often first in my class and for that reason I was noticed."

Cardinal Lustiger acknowledged that he received no encouragement or direction at home for his spiritual feelings. "I remember things my parents said," he has been quoted, such as "'Rabbis, priests, they all recount the same idiocles." same idiocies.

But by the age of 10, Lustiger was already reading the bible in secret. "I had already received a sense of G-d and I remember it all. It takes practically nothing for the sense of G-d to awaken itself in a child.

Despite his conversion, Lustiger came under increasing threats during the war years and found shelter with a Catholic family in Orleans. After liberation, he decided on the priesthood, eventually gaining appointment as Bishop of Orleans.

"I am perfectly aware of the indignation and contradictory sentiments that Jews feel vis a vis my position," the

cory sentiments that Jews feel vis a vis my position," the Cardinal told the Israeli journalists. "I don't want to provoke or hurt anyone."

For the record, Cardinal Lustiger has little to say about diplomatic recognition of Israel by the Vatican. It is known, however, that Lustiger has the respect of Pope John Paul II who, on April 13, visited the main synagogue in Rome, the first papal visit to a Jewish house of worship in history.

### International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations

May 20, 1986

Dear IJCIC Member:

AMERICAN SECRETARIAT: Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016 Tel.: (212) 686-8670

EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT: World Jewish Congress 1 Rue de Varembe 1211 Geneve 20, Switzerland Tel.: (022) 34 13 25

CONSTITUTENT AGENCIES: American Jewish Committee 165 East 56th Street New York, N.Y. 10022

B'nai B'rith 823 United Nations Plaza New York, N.Y. 10017

The Israel Interfaith
Association
P.O.B. 7739
Jerusalem 91.077, Israel

Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016

World Jewish Congress 1 Park Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016 In yesterday's mailing we sent you relevant information, culled from various press sources, concerning Christian-Jewish relations, the proposed Carmelite Convent at Auschwitz, and correspondence from the WCC and the Altiance Israelite Universelle.

In this mailing we are bringing to your attention press items which should be of interest to you and our work. (If you have interesting items to bring to the attention of our members, please do not hesitate to forward them to us for distribution).

- a. Prelate hails 20 Years of Church Dialogue with Jews Jewish World, 11/8-14/85
- b. Pope to Visit Rome Synagogue Palm Beach Jewish World, 4/4-10/86
- c. Roman Jews Welcome Papal Visit Jewish News, 4/3/86
- d. Auschwitz Convent Shocks Europe's Jews Jewish Chronicle, 1/16/86
- e. Convent Set for Auschwitz
  Intermountain Jewish News, 1/31/86
- f. Auschwitz Convent Stirs Vatican Row Jewish Week, 3/14/86
- g. Jews, Some Catholics Oppose Plans for Convent at Auschwitz Greater Phoenix Jewish News, 3/19/86
- h. European Chief Rabbis Urge Pope to Reconsider Convent at Auschwitz Jewish World, 4/3/86
- Auschwitz Convent to Remember Jews Jewish World, 5/16-22/86
- j. Cardinal Assures No Proselytizing by Nuns at Auschwitz Convent

Religious News Service, 5/14/86

Thank you for your cooperation and continued interest.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman Chairman

Dr. Leon A. Feldman Consultant

#### INTERNATIONAL NEWS

05-14-86

#### Cardinal assures no proselytizing by nuns at Auschwitz convent

By Religious News Service

NEW YORK (RNS) — The Carmelite convent at the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland "does not perform any external pastoral work or any propagandist activity," according to the cardinal in whose diocese it is located.

In a letter to Dr. Victor Goldbloom of Toronto, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews (ICCJ), Cardinal Frantiszek Macharski of Cracow also pledged that "no sacred Christian center will be founded within the camp, related or unrelated to the (convent)."

Last year, eight Polish Carmelite nuns moved into a storage building once used by the Nazis to store poison gas at Auschwitz and began using it as a center to pray for those who died at the concentration camp and the survivors. Pope John Paul II launched a fund-raising campaign to erect a convent on the site, and controversy arose over an appeal for the project issued by a group called The Church in Need/Help for Eastern European Priests.

A particular focus of criticism was a sentence in the fund-raising letter which called the convent "a spiritual focus and a guarantee of the conversion of our strayed brothers as well as proof of our desire to erase outrages so often done to the Vicar of Christ."

A coalition of Jewish groups in Belgium said it was "intolerable" to plan a convent at a site where so much Jewish blood was shed, and five European chief rabbis sent a message to the pope asserting that "the site of the former concentration camp has become synonymous with the Holocaust," and "turning it into a religious pilgrimage would be both painful and injurious."

Dr. Goldbloom, who is also president of the Canadian Council of Christians and Jews, wrote to Cardinal Macharski in March on behalf of the Executive Committee of the ICCJ to "express their concern and apprehension about the development of a large and conspicuous center at a place of such historic and emotional significance."

In his response, which was just released in the United States by the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Cardinal Macharski said there are currently 10 nuns at the center "and their number will not exceed 22." He said this limitation "serves well the care for imperceptibleness of the Christian presence in the largest place of extermination of the Jewish nation," and promised that the convent "will never overshadow that 'historic and emotional significance' of the camp."

The cardinal also promised that "no sacred Christian center will be founded within the camp, related or unrelated to the Carmel. The present specific vocation of the Carmel will not be changed under any circumstance. It does not perform any external pastoral work or any propagandist activity."

In his letter, Cardinal Macharski also wrote that "no man who wants to remain in truth can obliterate the difference distinguishing the martyrology of the Jewish nation of that time (of the Holocaust) from the martyrology of other nations; Jews were killed for the very fact that they had been the Jews."

He said the convent at Auschwitz was not being established in "a spirit of triumphalism or proselytism," and did not reflect "a desire to appropriate the symbolism of the place by Christians." The cardinal said he would "welcome with joy and support with my whole authority the foundation of a Jewish oratory at the Auschwitz camp."

## Auschwitz convent to remember Jews, says Polish cardinal

The Polish Roman Catholic prelate whose diocese includes the Auschwitz death camp site has offered assurances that a recently established convent there is not intended to diminish the fact that a majority of the camp's victims were Jews.

In a letter to Dr. Victor Goldbloom, president of the International Council of Christians and Jews: Cardinal Francicus Macharski wrote that 10 nuns who live in the Carmel convent, are dedicated to prayer for love among nations and believers of various religions in the spirit of expiation for crimes, especially for crimes committed against the Jewish nation.

Goldbloom had asked the cardinal to clarify reports that materials related to the convent's establishment referred only to "victims." without mention that most were Jews.

Macharski added that, as bishop of the diocese, he would welcome and support "with all my authority" the foundation of a Jewish chapel at the site.

Palm Beach Janish World 4/3/86

#### European Chief Rabbis Urge Pope To Reconsider Convent at Auschwitz

PARIS—Five chief rabbis from four European countries have urged Pope John Paul II to reconsider plans by the Roman Catholic Church to establish a convent at the site of the Auschwitz death camp in Poland.

A letter to the pontiff was signed by Immanuel Jakobvitz of Britain; Rene Sirat of France; Max Warschawski, Chief Rabbi of Alsatia; Moses Rosen of Romania; and Mordechai Piron of Zurich.

They stated in their letter, "The site of the former concentration camp has become synonymous with the Holocaust (of the Jewish people" and "turning it into a religious pilgrimage would be both painful and injurious."

The proposed convent would house nuns of the Carmelite order from a half dozen countries, including Germany and Poland.

In their letter to the Pope, the chief rabbis noted that Polish authorities had rejected a request to build a synagogue at the site on grounds that Auschwitz symbolized universal pain and suffering and could not be reserved for the use of any single faith. The letter argued that a Catholic convent at the site would be contrary to that ruling

# European chief rabbis urge Pope to reconsider convent at Auschwitz

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4-3-86 Jewish worker

March 14, 1986

# UUT BURE

ROME (JTA) - A controversy has erupted within the Roman Catholic hierarchy here over plans to establish a Carmelite convent on the site of the Auschwitz death camp where more than two million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War II.

The establishment of the convent was defended recently by Franciszek Cardinal Marcharski in the wake of protests by Jewish groups in West Europe and the United States that the site belongs to all who were massacred in the camp and that, therefore, no one group should establish itself there.

Macharski, in a sermon published in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, has acknowledged the special place Auschwitz holds. "The former camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau is in

that belongs without distinction to convent in an unused theater just 'all humanity and to every people," he said

Nevertheless, in his defense of the project, Macharski noted that Carmelite nuns founded a convent at the Dachau concentration camp in Germany 40 years ago and no one objected. He said the Catholic victims at Auschwitz included a priest, Maximillian Kolbe, who gave his life for a fellow prisoner and who was canonized in 1982, and Sister Edith Stein, a German Jew who converted to Catholicism and became a Carmelite nun.

/ However, some of Macharski's peers in the Roman Catholic hierarchy disagree with the project and . the nature of the fund-raising campaign initiated on its behalf by Pope John Paul II.

The Cracow archdiocese received a certain sense a new 'sacred place' permission in 1984 to establish the outside the former death camp which is now a state museum. The Polish-born pope launched the fund-raising campaign during his visit to Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg last May.

A letter from the Catholic-Euro pean fund-raising group, "Aid to the Church in Distress," promoted the Auschwitz convent as "a spiritual fortress and a guarantee of the conversion of strayed brothers from our countries as well as proof of our desire to erase outrages so often done to the vicar of Christ."

Albert Cardinal Decourtray of Lyon, France, called the fund-raising plan "disconcerting" and observed that Auschwitz would always remain "a reminder of the Shoah,' that is to say, the attempt to exterminate Jews because they are Jews."

A spokesman for Godried Cardinal Danneels of Malines-Brussels said the bishops of Belgium and The Netherlands were not consulted about the fund-raising and were "not very happy" about the campaign. paign.

A Vatican source familiar with the issue said no Jewish groups were consulted before the convent project was initiated in 1984 and added, "Perhaps this was a mistake." The source asked not to be identified: ... yar vangor (an all

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# Jews, some Catholics oppose plans for convent at Auschwitz

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ROME (JTA) — A controversy has broken out in the Roman Catholic hierarchy over plans to establish a Carmelite convent on the site of the Auschwitz death camp where more than two million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during World War II.

The establishment of the convent has been defended by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski in the wake of protests by Jewish groups in Western Europe and the United States that the site of Auschwitz belongs to all who were massacred there and that, therefore, no one group should establish itself there.

But according to Macharski, in a sermon published in the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano, "The former camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau is in a certain sense a new 'sacred place' that belongs without distinction to all humanity and to every people."

However, some of his peers in the Roman Catholic hierarchy disagree with the project and the nature of the fund-raising campaign initiated on its behalf by Pope John Paul II.

The Cracow Archdiocese received permission in 1984 to establish the convent in an unused theater just outside the former death camp which is now a state museum. The Polishborn pope launched the fundraising campaign during his visit to Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg last May.

A letter from the Catholic-European fund-raising group, "Help to the Church in Distress," promoted the Auschwitz convent as "a spiritual fortress and a guarantee of the conversion of strayed brothers from our countries as well as proof of our desire to erase outrages so often done to the Vicar of Christ."

Joseph Lichten, representative of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in Rome, objected to the letter, asking, "Was it necessary to speak of conversion here?"

A coalition of Jewish groups in Belgium called the plan to build a convent at a site where so much Jewish blood was shed "intolerable."

Cardinal Albert Decourtray of Lyon, France, called the fundraising plan "disconcerting" and observed that Auschwitz would always remain "a reminder of the attempt to exterminate Jews because they are Jews." A spokesman for cardinal Godfried Danneels of Malines-Brussels said the bishops of Belgium and The Netherlands were not consulted about the fund-raising and were "not very happy" about the campaign.

A Vatican source familiar with the issue said no Jewish groups were consulted before the convent project was initiated in 1984 and added, "Perhaps this was a mistake."

Lichten said the ADL and other groups have questioned why a convent must be built as a "symbol" at Auschwitz since Auschwitz already is a symbol for all those who suffered there.

Cardinal Macharski noted that Carmelite nuns founded a convent at the Dachau concentration camp in Germany 40 years ago and no one objected.

## Convent set for Auschwitz

BRUSSELS (JTA) — European Jewish communities are shocked and outraged at a plan by Polish Catholic Church officials to build a Carmelite convent on the site of the Auschwitz death camp where more than two million Jews were murdered by the Nazis during WWII, the World Jewish Congress reported. The WJCalso reported that at its request, the Polish government will intervene with church officials regarding their plan.

Belgian Jews first learned of the convent proposal when fundraising efforts for its building were organized by a group called "Help to the Church in Distress," which works for the Roman Catholic Church in Communist countries.

According to the Brussels evening newspaper Le Soir,

eight Carmelite monks have been living in Auschwitz since last May, in preparation for the erection of a convent there. The newspaper reports that the convent would symbolize: "Love, peace and reconciliation, witnessing the victorious power of the cross of Jesus. It will become a spiritual fortress, and the proof of the conversion of apostates and those who went astray in various countries."

In early December, when a delegation of the WJC led by its president Edgar Bronfman was officially received in Warsaw, the issue was raised with Polish authorities. Bronfman advised Poland's Minister of Religious Affairs Adam Lopatka of the categorical Jewish opposition to the proposed convent and received Lopatka's assurances that he would intervene directly with Polish Catholic officials.

In Geneva, the president of the International Council of Jewish Women, Leila Siegel, has written to Sister Sheila Sedawie of the Sisters of Zion asking that the placement of a convent in Auschwitz be prevented:

"We feel this way not only because of the martyrdom of millions of Jewish children, women and men," Seigel wrote, "but also because their martyrdom was shared by millions of human beings having various beliefs and creeds."

She added: "We believe that the ground of Auschwitz belongs to all who were massacred there and that, therefore, no one group should establish itself on this hallowed ground. Were this to happen, the action, however laudible in its aims, would create much misunderstanding and resentment."

Intermountain Je hews

# Auschwitz convent

# Auschwitz convent shocks Europe's Jews

BRUSSELS, (JTA) —
European Jewish communities are shocked and outraged at a plan by Polish
Catholic Church officials to
build a Carmelite convent on
the site of the Auschwitz
death camp where more than
two million Jews were murdered by the nazis during
World War II, the World
Jewish Congress reported.

The WJC also reported that at its request, the Polish government will intervene with church officials regarding their plan.

Belgian Jews first learned of the convent proposal when fundraising efforts for its building were organized by a group called "Help to the Church in Distress," which works for the Roman Catholic Church in Communist countries.

According to the Brussels evening newspaper Le Soir, eight Carmelite monks have been living in Auschwitz since last May, in preparation for the erection of a convent there.

The newspaper reports that the convent would symbolize: "Love, peace and reconciliation, witnessing the victorious power of the cross of Jesus."

# [start] AMERICAN JEWISH Original documents faded and/or illegible

NEW YORK - As the historic visit of Pope John Paul II to Rome's main synagogue on April II approaches, members of the International Jewish Liaison group for relations with the Catholic Church are scrambling to figure out what impact the visit is likely to have on the increasingly problematic Catholic-Jewish relationship.

Last week, two leading and frequently mutually antagonistic members of the Internation! Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultation (IJCIC), Rabbi Marc Tunnenbaum, International Affairs Director of the American Jewish Committee, and Israel Singer, general secretary of the World Jewish Congress, both adopted "wait and see" attitudes toward the Pope's first visit to the Rome synagogue, the first ever such papal visit to a Jewish house of worship. After participating in an IJCIC meeting last week, both Singer and Tannenbaum expressed the hope that the Pope would use the occasion of his synagogue visit to make a statement that would strengthen ties between the two religions and which would reverse the tenor of recent papal homilies which many IJCIC members view as anti-Semitic and damaging to Jewish-Catholic relations.

In a series of homilies over the past several months, the Pope has repeated Catholic dogma, referring to the Jews as responsible for the killing of Christ, and has expressed the viewpoint that a "new covenant" between God and believers in Christ has replaced the old covenant between God and Abraham, father of the Jewish people.

John Paul also seemed recently to downplay the theological significance of the land of Israel, stressing, that "God does not inhabit one particular piece of land," which Jewish leaders believe may signify a lack of sympathy for Jewish claims to the ancient land of the Jewish

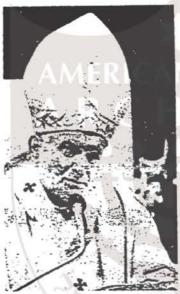
Both Tannenbaum and Singer indicated that while they expect the Pope to make conciliatory statements at the Rome synagogue, they feel that LICIC must work behind the scenes with key leaders of the Vatican to insure that this is not merely window-dressing and that the message of the homilies is not the Pope's true viewpoint on the Jewish people. "What we are saying is 'Will the true John Paul please stand up?" said Tannenbaum. "We hope and expect the Pope will speak in a concilitory vein at the synagogue, but what we want to know is what the Pope feels about the Jews in his kinkken."

Despite their present equanimity, however, Tannenbaum and Singer made clear that the sharp disagreements between them which nearly led late last year to the disintegration of LICIC, have not yet healed. Referring to Singer's sharp denunciation of LICIC last year for allegedly not pressing the Vatican hard enough to recognize Israel, and to World Jewish Congress President Edgar J.

Jewish leaders anticipate historic occasion

## Pope to Visit Rome Synagogue

By Walter Ruby



Pope John Paul II

AP/Wide World Photo

Bronfman's public call to New York Cardinal John J. O'Connor to urge the Pope to recognize Israel, Tannenbaum remarked," The tough guy, street-brawling approach employed last year by Singer and the WJC did not work and in fact has given extremists in the Catholic hierarchy an excuse to speak out against strengthening Catholic-Jewish ties." He added, "I think the WJC has had second thoughts about their approach and has moved away from their street-brawling stance... If however there is another such eruption from the WJC we'll have to look again at whether or not we can work with them."

Singer responded sharply that, "The WJC has not backed away one bit from its position, but believes that at this time, in advance of the Pope's visit to the synagogue, we ought to give the Vatican a chance to restate its position. What Tannenbaum calls 'street-brawling' is simply a statement of a dignified Jewish position. If it is 'street-brawling' for the President of the WJC to make a polite

suggestion to the cardinal of the city with the largest Jewish population in the world that he use his good offices to request the Vatican to recognize Israel... then we are all street-brawlers."

In his remarks Tannenbaum said that in his contacts with various high-level Vatican leaders he has found that "many of them also have expressed dismay over what Tannenbaum called "the regressive tone of the Pope's recent statements on Jews and Judaism." He said that his Vatican contacts have noted that the Pope received his religious training within the Polish Catholic Church, where the supposed role of the Jews as the killers of Jesus is taken as a matter of course and that when the Pope made his homilies, "it was a Polish parish priest speaking." According to Tannenbaum, who was one of the founders of LJCIC, and has generally been the Jewish spokesman who has taken the most conciliatory line vis-a-vis the Catholic church, "I am outraged by the Pope's remarks. They are unforgiveable. Unlike Catholics, however, I do not think the Pope is infallible and believe that we must work to mobilize our friends in the Catholic Church to understand that they do not have to accept the Pope's present teaching on the Jews.'

Tannenbaum said he has received reassuring signals from such Catholic supporters of Jewish-Catholic dialogue as Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, and Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris. He said, "I would expect that Willebrans and Lustiger will play some role in drafting the Pope's statement and that the Pope will likely return to the more positive statements he made before this series of homilies " Tannenhaum added, "Even if that were to occur, we are still left with the question how to deal with the 'good cop, bad cop' symbolism the Pope has been showing us. Certainly one positive gesture in the synagogue is not going to be enough to negate what they said before. We are going to have to face together with the Catholics some basic questions. We are going to have to insist that the Vatican face the hard questions and give us meaningful assurances that the anti-Jewish statements will not be repeated."

Tannealscum sud in his recent conver sations with top Vatican officials he had used that "something is in the air in Rome" in terms of the possible establish ment of diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel. He said that his sources tell him that there are serious in ternal strategy sessions going on in the Vatican as to how to bring this about. "One cardinal said to me, "The decision has been made to establish diplomatic relations with Israel. The question is not whether we will do this, but when and how." "Tannenbaum said he believes that the main hang-up for the Vatican on the issue is concern that the establishment of relations with Israel could lead to reprisals by fanatical Muslims against Christians in Lebanon and other parts of the Arab world. Tannenbaum said the international Jewish community ought to be aware of the delicate nature of this issue for the Vatican and not pressure the Pope publicly on the recognition of

Asked whether the Pope's homilies on the Jews had not undercut his moderate position, Tanenbaum said, "No, in fact there is evidence that extreme positions on the Jewish side served as justification for more extreme positions on the Catholic side. There is no question that there is a danger in dynamism here. But I know many Catholic leaders are dismayed also (by the Pope's statement)..."

However, Singer responded, "I think the homolies have undercut the position Marc (Tannenbaum) was taking before. In his more recent statements Tannenbaum is saying the kinds of things (about the unacceptability of the Pope's language concerning the Jews) that I was saying six months ago."

Singer called the Pope's upcoming synagogue visit "a symbolic act," but added, "Symbolism can also be a substitute. I hope the Pope will use the occasion to reassert the spirit of Nostrae Aetate and begin moving forward again toward full normalization between Catholics and Jews visa-vis temporal relations between the Vatican and Israel."

Asked about Tannenbaum's assertion that the Church is moving toward recognition of Israel, Singer commented, "I prefer not to give prophecy. I would only reemphasize that the WJC will continue to make clear to the Vatican that we want recognition. We will do so in a polite but firm manner. Recognition by the Vatican is not necessary for Israel's survival, but we want good relations with every country and faith." He added, "It's a shame that the Church may view (the WJC's advocacy position on the recognition issue) as an embarrassment and that others may see it as street-brawling. We are making our case from a dignified Jewish position and will continue to do

# [end]

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# Roman Jews Welcome Papal Visit To Synagogue, Question Symbolism

#### By LISA PALMIERI BILLIĞ

ROME (JTA) — The Jewish community has warmly welcomed the Vatican's announcement that Pope John Paul II will visit Rome's main synagogue this month.

But while this is viewed as an "historic gesture," the feeling among Jewish leaders is that it will be up to the Pontiff whether the occasion is merely "symbolic" or contribute substantively to Catholic-Jewish relations.

The visit may well be the first papal visit ever to a Jewish house of worship.

#### 'Fantastic Step'

"It could be a fantastic step forward," said Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, "or it could be a perpetuation of ambiguities." She was referring to certain fundamental issues that remain unresolved after more than 20 years of Vatican-Jewish dialogue that began after Vatican Council II in 1965.

The chief Vatican spokesman, Joaquin Navarro Vallis, announced at a press conference last week that the Pope's visit would take place the afternoon of April 13. He said it would be the first such visit in living memory, though he could not be certain it would be an historic precedent.

The Jewish community, in a statement recently released, expressed its "satisfaction at the decision of Pope John Paul II to visit the synagogue of Rome," adding that "this will mark an important step in the direction of an even more rewarding dialogue."

#### **Traumatic Event**

The Rome synagogue was the scene of a traumatic event in October, 1982, when worshippers were attacked by Arab terrorists with machineguns and grenades. A two-year-old boy, Stefano Tache, was killed and 34 persons were wounded.

More than a year earlier, on Feb. 9, 1981, the religious leader of the synagogue, Rome's Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, met with the Pope at a church adjacent to the Old Jewish ghetto, about 100 yards from the synagogue. From that time on, a Papal visit to the synagogue itself seemed more and more in the realm of possibility, awaiting only the appropriate "conditions."

Zevi stressed in her remarks that the conditions could never have materialized but for the changes in Catholic-Jewish relations engendered by Vatican II. Yet there is disappointment in Jewish circles here and abroad that the changes have not progressed further than they have. One issue that rankles Jews is the Vatican's persistent refusal to extend formal recognition to the State of Israel.

#### **Main Criticism**

This was one of the main criticisms vented by a Jewich ecumenical group in June, 1985, over a just-published Vatican document called "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching the Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church." According to the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), the Notes fail to acknowledge the religious significance of Israel to the Jewish people and refer only briefly and superficially to the Holocaust.

The IJCIC called them a retrogression from the historic "Nostra Aetada (Our Times) that emerged from Vatican Council in 1964 and the Dec. 1, 1974, "Guidelines and Suggestions for the Application of the Declaration Nostra Aetate."

#### Pope Lays Groundwork .

Dr. Joseph Lichten, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith's liaison with the Vatican, said that the Pope's forthcoming visit "will certainly be a historical event. Never before has a Pope set foot in a Jewish place of worship." He added, "I did not expect this to come about so soon, but I am pleasantly touched that it has."

A papal visit to the synagogue has been long considered a necessary "next step" in the interreligious dialogue between Jews and enlightened Christians, but it was never openly solicited by Rome's Jewish community.

It would be up to the Vatican to make the move, the Jews always felt, considering the historical context of Jewish relations with the Church of Rome. The groundwork was laid by the Pope's visit several months ago to the Waldensian Protestant Church in Rome, another historical "first."

John Paul II, moreover, has received more world Jewish leaders in audience than any of his predecessors. Wherever possible, he has met with Jewish leaders abroad in the course of his considerable travels.

The main synagogue is an historical landmark in Rome. Located in the Lungotevere Cenci, near the river Tiber, it was laid down in 1900. On July 2, 1904, it was officially visited by King Victor Emanuel III. It was formally dedicated on July 28 of that year at ceremonies attended by the highest authorities of the Italian state and the Rome municipality.

#### JEWISH -CATHOLIC DIALOGUE

### relate hails 20 years of Church dialogue with Jews

Asking how there can be prejudice "if we all believe we are made in the spirit of God," the Rev. John McGann, Bishop of Rockville Centre, snoke from the pulpit of the Manetto Hill Jewish Center in Plainview last week to review the accomplishments of Vatican II and its impact on Long Island.

Vatican II, the ground-breaking convocation of the Catholic hierarchy called by Pope John XXIII to modernize the Church 20 years ago, issued Nostra Aetate, a declaration of official Church policy towards other faiths which for the first time specifically repudiated the charge of deicide against the Jews as a people.

"If it weren't for (Nostra Aetate), I don't think we would be here. said McGann from the synagogue pulpit. "So many things have happened since then...Pope John XXIII was the one who called the council, and with all of his wisdom and foresight, I don't think he knew what would happen. It opened the win-

In the document, McGann pointed out, the Catholic Church states that it "rejects nothing that is true and holy" in other religions. Referring to the conflicts between Christians and Moslems over the centuries, it "exhorts everyone to forget the past and to work together for social justice, moral welfare and peace and



If it weren't for Vatican II's positive declaration on the Jews, "I don't think we would be here." said Bishop John McGann of Rockville Centre from the pulpit of Manetto Hill Jewish Center

freedom for all."

The fourth chapter of the document deals with Judaism. Instead of simply treating Judaism with the esteem it pays to the other religions, McGann said, the document searches for the spiritual ties between Judaism and Christianity,

Judaic Roots

"The beginnings of the Church's faith and her place in God's plan of salvation can be traced back to the patriarchs, to Moses and to the prophets," he said, "The Church cannot forget that she received God's relevation in the Old Testament through the people with whom God had made His covenant. Furthermore, the Church still draws sustenance from Israel."

The document also points out that the apostles and most of the early followers of Jesus were Jewish, McGann observed. He said that "in a moving passage, the council teaches that 'God holds the Jews, most dear for the sake of their fathers; He does not repent of the gifts He makes or of the calls he

"Since there is such a vast spiritual patrimony common to Jews and schools. Christians, the Second Vatican

Council wished to foster and to commend mutual understanding and esteem for one another," McGann said. "It was suggested that this could be produced through biblical and theological studies and through brotherly dialogues."

Looking out at the more than 200 Jews and non-Jews in the audience, McGann said the bishops who attended the council were "well aware of the unhappy history of the relationship between Christians and Jews. In solemn tones, the council declared that 'the Jews should not be represented as rejected by God or accursed.' The Church rejects persecution of anyone and 'decries hatred, persecutions, manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by anyone."

Local Reactions Soon after the document was released, the three bishops of the Catholic Church in the New York area issued a document entitled Guidelines for the Advancement of Catholic-Jewish Relations. Those guidelines led to the establishment of the Catholic-Jewish Relations Committee of the Diocesean Commission on Ecumenicism.

The committee held its first meeting in 1968 and immediately established a Catholic-Jewish Relations Committee of Nassau-Suffolk on which the Jewish and Catholic members sit as equals. Rabbi Theodore Steinberg, of the Malverne Jewish Center, was appointed by the Long Island Board of Rabbis to be the committee's Jewish representative and co-chairman. Msgr. George Graham was the Catholic co-chairman.

McGann said that since its creation, the committee has served as a vehicle through which Catholic and Jewish leaders have been able to discuss the problems and opportunities for better relations between the people of both religions. He noted that the committee was involved in the early discussions about introducing Holocaust studies into the cutricula of Catholic and public

"The members of the committee

saw the need for a new organization to offer its services to communities interested in teaching their young people about the Nazis' plans to destroy the entire Jewish people," McGann recalled. With its input, and with the cooperation of numerous other Christian and Jewish groups, the Long Island Interfaith Committee for Teaching About The Holocaust was established in early 1977, he said.

The Holocaust

"The members of the committee agreed that, after Auschwitz, we are all survivors and we are all in peril," said McGann, "The evils of that era still survive and neo-Nazi groups are still recruiting new members.

"The study of the Holocaust illuminates the central concern of our age, the very survival of humanity itself. Such a study raises questions of civic morality which go to the heart of the American educational enterprise. Our young people have to be shown the ultimate consequences of group hatred. They have to see the horrors of which a modern technological and industrial society is capable. We must ask again and again: What kind of people participate in the processes of genocide?"

McGann recalled that he visited Auschwitz with a group of Polish persons from Long Island. He termed it a "horrifying experience."

"It is almost unbelievable that this could have happened in our time by human beings," he said. "People were put to death there. To go through that camp is very hard. Some of those in our group couldn't see it all."

He said it is "shocking to realize that they (the Nazis) are not monsters with green skin and horns, but people just like ourselves. We have to learn how it happened in the past and whether it could happen again. We have to learn who resisted and who acquiesced in these horrors. We have to ask how fragile is our emocratic system."-

.The program also included remarks from other area clergy. The Rev. Fred Herrer of Hicksville said We must talk with each other on that in furthering the dialogue between Christians and Jews it is necessary to "make sure-everything is defined as clearly as possible. It's easy for me to speak of the Old Testament, but that reference may be

Stream and president of the New York Board of Rabbis, pointed out that there has been an "enormous amount of damage inflicted over the last 1,900 years" in terms of Christian-Jewish relations. Some Christians, he said, "believed that Jews were cursed because of the crime of deicide."

"Could any two peoples have been further apart?" he asked rhetorically.

Reviews Jewish History

Friedman noted that the first Jews came to the New World in 1654 and that in the 19th and 20th centuries millions of Jews and Catholics arrived. But it was the Holocaust which "raised moral questions for both Catholics and Jews" in this country, he said, and the rebirth of Israel that placed Christianity and Judaism on an unchartered course in which "something had to give." That something occurred in 1965 with the Vatican II Council, he said.

"Nostra Aetate is directed at Christians, not at Jews," he stressed. "It repudiates the false belief that all Jews are guilty of deicide and refutes anti-Semitism. Like the Declaration of Independence, it broke new ground and began 20 years of dramatically new relations between our two communities."

Friedman said that today Jews and Catholics work on such common concerns as religious liberty, human rights and educating the world on the problem of world hunger. Anti-Semitic references have been removed from Catholic liturgy and Catholic seminaries are changing their teaching approaches regarding Judaism.

Rabbi Ezra Finkelstein, of the Midway Jewish Center in Syosset and president of the Nassau-Suffolk Rabbinical Assembly, looked over the assemblage and said simply: "God must enjoy this almost as much as we do."

He said Vatican II brought an end to stereotypes and has acted as a "bridge to enable people to work with each other in common endeavors.

a continuing basis," he urged. "We must struggle with ourselves to see the gains made in the last two decades and which brought the blessing of this night to us. We must continue for ourselves, the world and offensive to some. We must be sen-God, who made us in His image, sitive."
What we plinted will not be lest and Rabbi Morris Friedman, spirituals will be a source of plessing for the leader, of Temple Hilled in Valley God who gave us light."

#### International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations

May 21, 1986

Dear IJCIC Member:

AMERICAN SECRETARIAT: Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016 Tel.: (212) 686-8670

EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT: World Jewish Congress 1 Rue de Varembe 1211 Geneve 20, Switzerland Tel.: (022) 34. 13.25

CONSTITUTENT AGENCIES: American Jewish Committee 165 East 56th Street New York, N.Y. 10022

B'nai B'rith 823 United Nations Plaza New York, N.Y. 10017

The Israel Interfaith
Association
P.O.B. 7739
Jerusalem 91.077, Israel

Synagogue Council of America 327 Lexington Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016

World Jewish Congress 1 Park Avenue New York, N.Y. 10016 Enclosed please find the following items:

- Letter from Johannes Cardinal Willebrands, president, Secretariatus Ad Christianorum Unitatem Fovendam, dated May 12, 1986, inviting our participation in the proposed Day of Prayer at Assisi, fixed by Pope John Paul II for Monday, October 27, 1986. (\*)
- "Historisch: Der Besuch des Papstes in der römischen Synagoge," from HERDER KORRESPONDENZ, no. 3 (May 1986).
- 3. Most interesting leadarticle entitled "Der Staat muss, zumindest bei seiner Gesetzgebung, vom Menschen nach dem Sündenfall ausgehen," by Johannes Wilhelm Gaddum, HERDER KORRESPONDENZ, no. 5 (May 1986). A careful reading is suggested.

Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes.

Sincerely yours,

Rabbi Mordecai Waxman Chairman

Dr. Leon A. Feldman Consultant

(\*) Please note that Monday, October 27, 1986 is the day after Simhat Torah.

The calendar looks as follows: Friday, October 24 - Hoshanna Rabbah

Saturday, " 25 - Shemini Atzeret

Sunday, " 26 - Simhat Torah

E Civitate Vaticana, die 12th May, 1986

Prot. N. 2485 /86/b

Rabbi Mordecai WAXMAN
Chaiman
Synagogue Council of America

Dear Rabbi Waxman,

As you know, it has been posible for His Holiness Pope John Paul II to fix the date of the proposed Day of Prayer at Assisi for Monday 27th October 1986.

It is now my happy task on behalf of His Holiness the Pope to invite you as chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, to take part in this important occasion at Assisi.

We are aware that such a gathering, which provides an occasion for people of different faiths to engage in acts of prayer according to their traditions in the one place calls for skill and delicacy in organization.

Some first steps have been taken in planning the Day of Prayer. It is envisaged that it would consist of the following three parts:

- (a) The Welcome and Opening Acts
- (b) The Acts of Worship

Each religion will be asked to organize its own act of worship in separate places in Assisi. It is foreseen that all Christians will join together in a common act of prayer.

(c) The Concluding Acts

This part of the day is foreseen as an occasion of being together for a common affirmation of the commitment to peace accompanied perhaps by some symbolic gesture.



#### SECRETARIATUS AD CHRISTIANORUM UNITATEM FOVENDAM

E Civitate Vaticana, die 12th May, 1986

Prot. N. (In responsione flat mentio hoius numeri)

It is hoped to be able to plan the observance of the Day that will take full account of the needs and sensibilities of all who participate.

With deep sense of solidarity in working for understanding and for peace and with fraternal good wishes.

> I remain Sincerely yours

Johannes Cardinal Willebrands

President

Vorgänge

205

#### Historisch

Der Besuch des Papstes in der römischen Synagoge

Ereignisse "historisch" zu nennen, wagt man kaum mehr, bedenkt man die inflationare Verwendung dieses Attributes in einer sensationsverwöhnten Öffentlichkeit wie der heutigen. Wenn es jedoch ein Ereignis verdient, als ein solches bezeichnet zu werden, dann ist es der Besuch von Johannes Paul II. in der römischen Synagoge. Petersdom und Synagoge trennt, was die räumliche Entfernung angeht, nicht viel. Was sich jedoch in 2000 Jahren jüdisch-christlicher Vergangenheit gerade in Rom an Verfemung und Greueltaten angesammelt hat, stellt einen Graben dar, der durch den zwischen Vatikanhügel und dem von Paul IV. im 16. Jahrhundert eingerichteten ehemaligen römischen Getto verlaufenden, brükkenüberspannten Tiber kaum hinlänglich symbolisiert wird. Dies alles wurde in der überaus eindrucksvollen. Feierstunde am frühen Abend des 13. April 1986 nicht einfach ausgelöscht, wie dies eine französische Zeitung meinte. Man ging der Erinnerung daran nicht aus dem Weg. In den Ansprachen des Präsidenten der römischen jüdischen Gemeinde, des Mathematik-Professors Giacomo Saban, des Oberrabbiners der Gemeinde, Elio Toaff, sowie des Papstes (vgl. ds. Heft, S. 244) war die schmerzliche Vergangenheit der gegenseitigen Beziehungen präsent.

Es war nicht das erste Mal, daß der Papst sich mit Vertretern des Judentums traf – auf vielen seiner Auslandsreisen gehörten solche Begegnungen zum Programm, so auch in Mainz bei seinem Deutschlandbesuch 1980. In der Sache ging Johannes Paul II. auch nicht über das hinaus, was vor gut 20 Jahren gegen Ende des Konzils in dem epochemachenden Konzilsbeschluß "Nostra aetate" grundgelegt wurde (Was "Nostra aetate" in dieser Hinsicht verändert hat, riefen in Rom traditionalistische Gruppen in Erinne-

rung, die das Oberhaupt der katholischen Kirche vor dem Gang in die Synagoge warmen) Und trotzdem setzte der Papst mit diesem Besuch ein Zeichen, das weit über das hinausgeht, was bis heute weithin die judisch-christliche Wirklichken ausmacht. Im übrigen wird man von kaum einem Detail des Pontifikates von Johannes Paul II. mit so viel Berechtigung sagen können, daß es sich um ein ureigenstes Anliegen des früheren Erzbischofs von Krakau, Karol Wojtyla, handelt wie bei diesem Besuch. Dies wurde auch schon deutlich beim Besuch des Papstes in dem zur Erzdiözese Krakau gehörenden ehemaligen Konzentrationslager Auschwitz aus Anlaß seiner ersten Polenreise 1979.

Jedoch gehört es auch zur Realität dieses Pontifikates - und hier wird man eine Parallele zu dem Besuch des Papstes in der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche in Rom vom Dezember 1983 ziehen können -, daß manche der spektakulären Gesten dieses Papstes mit einem entsprechenden Fortschritt in der Sache nicht immer synchron laufen. Allerdings gehört es zum Wesen von Zeichen, daß sie oft aus eben dieser Tatsache heraus ihre Dynamik entwickeln. Anderseits hätte es so viel gar nicht gegeben, das der Papst über das Zeichen hinaus hätte anstoßen können bei seinem Synagogenbesuch. Daß er in bezug auf die ausstehende Anerkennung des Staates Israel durch den Heiligen Stuhl eine Richtungsänderung vornehmen würde, das war ernsthaft weder für die Juden zu erwarten, noch für die Araber zu befürchten. Daß er zu den judisch-christlichen Beziehungen, zur Berücksichtigung des Judentums in Theologie und Verkündigung Neues sagen würde, das war nach der Veröffentlichung der Hinweise der Vatikanischen Kommission für die Beziehungen zum Judentum im vergangenen Jahr (vgl. HK, Oktober 1985, 467-471) auch kaum mehr zu erwar-

Bliebe noch die Tatsache, daß der Papst in bezug auf die schuldhafte Verstrickung der Kirche in Antisemitismus und Judenverfolgung sich mit

den Worten von "Nostra aetate" darauf beschrankte zu sagen, daß die Kirche "alle Haßausbruche und Verfolgungen, alle Manifestationen des Antisemitismus, die sich zu irgendeiner Zeit und von irgendeinem gegen die Juden gerichtet haben", beklage Auch die Wiederholung des "von wem auch immer", mit dem er wohl auch seine Vorganger im Amt meinte. ändert nichts daran, daß er die "judischen Freunde und Brüder" im Namen der durch ihn repräsentierten Kirche nicht eigentlich um Vergebung gebeten hat. Man mag es bedauern. Die Bedeutung dieses Besuches wird dies hingegen kaum schmälern kön-



## HERDER KORRESPONDENZ

Heft 5 · 40. Jahrgang · Mai 1986

Der Staat muß, zumindest bei seiner Gesetzgebung, vom Menschen nach dem Sündenfall ausgehen.

Johann Wilhelm Gaddum

#### Politische Sitten

Wer den vorangestellten Titel liest, meint vielleicht, hier beginne ein rabulistisches Moralisieren über die vielen öffentlichen und halböffentlichen, zum Teil im politischen Bereich selbst, zum Teil im Wirtschaftsleben mit seinen politischen Verflechtungen sich abspielenden Affären und Skandale.

Doch solches ist hier nicht beabsichtigt. Soweit es einem nicht schlechthin die Sprache verschlägt, haben dies bereits andere besorgt, mit jenem täglichen Medienernst und jener normativen Gründlichkeit, wie sie Kritikern fast nur hierzulande zur Verfügung stehen, wenn es gilt, politischen Morast aufzudecken oder das Aufgedeckte unter Gesichtspunkten der öffentlichen Moral zu würdigen.

Ausnahmsweise wollten wir deshalb die beklagten öffentlichen Kalamitäten nicht direkt angehen, sondern uns über den Weg moralistischer Kritiker ihnen nähern, deren Argumente nicht nachahmend, sondern sie ein wenig in Frage stellend.

#### Vernetzungen schlechten Stils

Gehen wir also Argument für Argument durch: Um das Einfachste gleich in die Mitte zu rücken: Es heißt, deutschen Gemeinwesenverantwortlichen – das sind Politiker jeglichen Grades – fehle es an Stil und bei der "Bewältigung" jüngerer und fernerer Vergangenheit an Erinnerung. Hinzu kommt dann gleich als zum gleichen Komplex gehörend der Vorwurf fehlender "Kinderstube": der Politiker, nein der Republik überhaupt.

Nun gut: stilvoll ist es nicht, wenn ein späterer Berliner Bürgermeister schnell einmal an einem scheinbar unbelauschten Ort Rechtsradikalen ein paar tausend Mark zuschiebt, damit sie der eigenen Partei keine Scherereien machen. Sauberer Wahlkampf? Bestimmt nicht. Und wenn von einem Konzernboß einem Parteivorsitzenden – heute seines Zeichens Bundeskanzler – so schnell über den Tisch 50000 Mark in bar in die Hand gedrückt wer-

den - für Parteizwecke natürlich - und der nimmt sie einfach so: das ist zwar nicht unsauber, obwohl es danach riecht, aber stilvoll ist es gewiß nicht.

Doch aus was oder aus wem setzt sich in einer wirklichen Demokratie 'die "politische Klasse" zusammen? Gewiß nicht aus blauem Blut – wozu auch – und auch nicht aus lauter stiltrainierten Absolventen von Eliteschulen – vor denen uns Gott und die bisher fehlenden Einrichtungen verschonen mögen. Es sind Leute aus dem Volk: weder als Stilisten geboren noch als solche nach vorne gekommen oder im rauhen politischen Aufstiegsgeschäft zu solchen geworden. Vorbilder an Stil und Moral? Wird da nicht in die Politiker und über sie natürlich in den Staat projiziert, was man selber nicht ist und auch nicht sein kann: zum mindesten im politischen Personal solle einem das eigene Ich-Ideal begegnen?

Natürlich gibt es typische Formen der Vernetzung schlechten Stils in dem, was man politisches Geschäft nennt: das Zusammentreffen zwischen einer mehr oder weniger ausgeprägten Großmannssucht von im Sinne der feinen Gesellschaft (gibt es sie irgendwo ohne das jeweils Halbseidene?) ganz und gar nicht stilsicheren Wirtschaftsfunktionären und in ihrer Herkunft und persönlichen Lebensweise proletenhaft-kleinbürgerlichen Politikern. Manchmal mögen sogar Großmannssucht und kleinbürgerlich-proletenhafte Kumpanei in den Stilen beider kumulieren. Und natürlich ist es ein Problem: mit der Rekrutierung und dem Aufstieg von Politikern. Der hierher gehörende Vorwurf lautet: In der gegenwärtigen "politischen Klasse" (der Ausdruck trifft nicht ganz zu, sie regeneriert sich - noch - nicht aus sich selbst) fehle es an gestandenen Quereinsteigern aus den sonstigen, wirtschaftlichen und sozialen vor allem freiberuflichen Eliten; es gebe in den Regierungen und Parlamenten fast nur noch Berufspolitiker und beurlaubte Beamte, also vorwiegend Leute, die ausschließlich von Politik leben, und solche Politiker seien eben auch leichter korrumpierbar. Er ist so leicht nicht zu entkräften.

#### Politiker sind sehr gut als Sündenbock zu gebrauchen

Aber wie soll das in einer sehr arbeitsteiligen Dienstleistungsgesellschaft anders gemacht werden? Wie soll ein Freiberufler den für ihn im allgemeinen doch nicht gerade risikofreien Schritt in die Politik tun? Anderseits: es scheint wirklich bei vielen Berufspolitikern die Meinung und ein entsprechend unwiderstehlicher Drang vorzuherrschen, erst durch Anhäufung materieller Reichtümer wirklich etwas sein zu können (oder zu wollen), also den politischen Beruf nicht nur so nebenbei, sondern hauptsächlich als Mittel wirtschaftlichen "Aufstiegs" zu benutzen. Das erhöht natürlich die Korrumpierbarkeit und Bestechlichkeit. Allerdings, was diese beiden Formen von Sittenverderbnis angeht, wissen Geschichtsschreiber des 19. Jahrhunderts sogar aus dem angeblich mit allen guten preußischen Tugenden ausgestatteten Bismarckreich auch den Eisernen Kanzler selbst betreffend - Erheblicheres zu berichten, als es zu gegenwärtigen Regierungen selbst der ehrgeizigste Enthüllungsjournalismus zutage fördert. Und nicht nur Italien, selbst Frankreich wäre als Demokratie schon zugrunde gegangen, machte man aus jeder Korruptionsaffäre eine politische Krise.

Das eigentliche Problem wird also wohl sein: gewiß eine übermäßig materielle Gesinnung bei Politikern in einem angeblich postmateriellen Zeitalter – aber wo gibt es die sonst im gesellschaftlichen und persönlichen Dasein nichtund – sicherlich wichtiger, im Grunde problematischer – das Bedürfnis nach einem stabilen Selbstwertgefühl, das die Politik dem Politiker offenbar häufig nicht vermittelt. Warum das so ist, dem wäre nachzugehen.
Und was die fehlenden Quereinsteiger betrifft: in hochspezialisierten Dienstleistungsgesellschaften geht das eben so. Die Medien, aus denen neben den Universitäten die Kritik an der Professionalisierung der Politik hauptsächlich kommt, sollten einmal bei sich selbst überlegen, wie sie Quereinsteigern eine Chance geben; vielleicht wirkt das dann anregend auch auf den politischen Bereich.

Aber da sind noch die Gedächtnislücken bezüglich jüngerer und vor allem fernerer Vergangenheit. Politiker haben ein natürliches Interesse, das weniger Erbauliche in ihrem Leben oder aus ihren Geschäften kleinzuschreiben oder gar zu vertuschen. Sie tun es von selbst, brauchen gar nicht erst durch die ihnen auferlegte Vorbildfunktion dazu genötigt werden. Aber die Nötigung durch Vorbildfunktion gibt es natürlich auch. Und wahrscheinlich ergänzt sich beides zum zittrigen Vorsatz: ja keinen Fehler machen. Die Fehler und Blackouts passieren so natürlich erst recht. Die öffentliche Freude darüber ist dann mindestens so groß wie der obligatorisch zu äu-Bernde Unmut. Und erst beides zusammen ist so recht dazu angetan, ganze Nationen monatelang zu beschäftigen, während es doch so sinnreich wäre, Regierung und Parlamenten wegen der Sicherung des Rentensystems, der Bekämpfung der Arbeitslosigkeit und der doch alle

interessièrenden Technologiepolitik mit Sachargumenten auf die Finger zu sehen. Aber nicht zufällig gibt es politische Redakteure in großer Zahl, während gute Wirtschaftsjournalisten, denen ihr Metier auch noch Spaß macht, recht selten anzutreffen sind. Politik ist für ihre Kritiker besonders in Massendemokratien mit wirklicher Pressefreiheit halt immer auch noch das beste und relativ risikofreie Unterhaltungsgeschäft. Politiker sind gerade in Massendemokratien als Sündenböcke gut zu gebrauchen.

#### In der Vergangenheitsbewältigung steckt auch Pharisäisches

Mit den Erinnerungslücken, die sich auf sehr viel weiter Zurückliegendes beziehen, wird es allerdings sehr viel schwieriger. Da kommt vieles zusammen an unbewältigter Vergangenheit und schlecht bewältigter Gegenwart. Man stockt schon beim Wort. Warum immer dieses Bewältigen, wo alles wirkliche Bewältigen aussichtslos ist? Aufarbeiten wäre besser. Da weiß jeder von vornherein, daß immer noch Unaufgearbeitetes übrig bleibt. Aber man will das perfektionistischere Bewältigen. Vielleicht weil sich das Unaufgearbeitete besser damit verdrängen läßt (zum Unterschied zwischen beiden vgl. HK, Mai 1985, S. 197 ff.). Die Schuld, die die Generation der Väter (heute vielfach Großväter) auf sich geladen hat, ist groß - in allen Teilen des Dritten Reiches und allen Staatsgebieten, die die Nazis Deutschland einverleibt hatten. Wäre weniger verdrängt worden, wäre nicht noch 40 Jahre nach dessen Ende durch Gerichte und vor allem politisch - ich meine anhand von konkreten Personen, mit dem Nazismus als Ganzem und wie es dazu kam, wird Gott sei Dank keine Generation je ganz fertig werden - so vieles aufzudecken und zu klären.

Seitdem es den "Fall Waldheim" gibt, scheint es aber zwischen Bundesrepublikanern und Österreichern eine Art wetteifernde Auseinandersetzung zu geben, welches von beiden Ländern nun Vergangenheit, vor allem antisemitische, mehr oder besser oder erst gar nicht verdränge. Es ist schwierig und vermutlich auch stilwidrig, sich in die Auseinandersetzung über unterschiedliche Ansichten seiner verschiedenen Vaterländer übereinander einzumischen. Aber wenn Bundesdeutsche der vielleicht nicht immer aus den Wolken geholten Ansicht sind, Österreicher hätten es sich mit der Aufarbeitung ihrer nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit (noch) weniger schwer gemacht als die Bundesdeutschen - die DDR kann ohnehin schlecht zum Vergleich herangezogen werden -, so sollten sie vielleicht trotz aller deutschnationalen Österreicher, die fast bruchlos ins Nazitum übergingen, und trotz beträchtlich vieler Österreicher in den nazistischen Führungsrängen doch wenigstens bedenken, daß nicht der "Austrofaschist" Schuschnigg in die erste deutsche Republik, sondern Hitler in Österreich einmarschiert ist, wie groß auch nach allem, was vorausgegangen war, die Zustimmung zum "Anschluß" unter der

damaligen österreichischen Bevölkerung sein mochte. Und sollten Österreicher tatsächlich die besseren Verdränger oder auch nur weniger selbstquälerisch sein als andere Bevölkerungen deutscher Zunge, so möge man ihnen doch wenigstens zugute halten, daß sie sich ihren Freud und ihren Adler (auch ihren Schnitzler) selbst hervorgebracht haben.

Wer aber in Osterreich meint, angesichts des speziellen alteingefleischten, weit übers Land hinauswirkenden Antisemitismus und trotz Holocaust immer noch auf antisemitische Gefühle nicht verzichten zu können und unsaubere Methoden einiger Leute zum Anlaß neuer Verschwörungstheorien nimmt, sollte gerade, wenn er katholisch ist, nicht nur die eigene Mitschuld am Genozid an den Juden bedenken, sondern sich auch daran erinnern, daß Osterreicher nicht nur die tieferen Einblicke in die eigene Seele, sondern überhaupt übermäßig vieles an spezifisch österreichischer Kultur jüdischen Mitbürgern von einst verdanken. Aber offenbar macht gerade solches den Antisemitismus - wie auch anderswo - so zählebig. Trägt wenigstens die historische Geste des Papstes, sein Besuch in der römischen Synagoge (vgl. ds. Heft, S. 205), auch im jetzt überhitzten Österreich ein wenig zur Versöhnung bei? Hoffen wir's!

Was den "Fall Waldheim" selbst betrifft, hat er freilich auch seine komischen politischen Seiten. Wenn jemand so unpolitisch ist, daß er meint, er könne als Spitzendiplomat sich mit generalisierend ungenauen Angaben über sein Leben im Dritten Reich und im Krieg hinweghelfen, und dabei Generalsekretär der Vereinten Nationen wird, weiß man nicht so recht, ob man das beunruhigend oder erheiternd finden soll. Einfalt ist zwar gefährlich, aber irgendwo auch sympathisch. Das ist im Weltmaßstab ungefähr so, wie wenn in Bonn ein mit allen Wassern gewaschener Generalsekretär dem Vorsitzenden seiner Partei in einer gerichtsrelevanten Angelegenheit einen Blackout bescheinigt. Abgefeimt ist unsere "politische Klasse" offenbar trotz allem nicht. Wenigstens die Praktiker unter unseren Moralisten des Politischen müßten sich eigentlich darüber freuen.

Doch zurück zur Sache: soviel an Verdrängen und Wegsehen immer wieder auftaucht, die Tendenz zum Verdrängen unter den Alten ist nicht viel größer als der Pharisäismus unter den Jungen und denen, die die Jungen dafür ausnutzen. Wer Vergangenheit auf Zukunft bin bewältigen, aufarbeiten will - und das ist wohl der mit Aufarbeitung allein erreichbare Sinn -, muß wissen, daß er politische Freiheit um so leichter verliert, je weniger er sich, sei es mit den Lebensbedingungen in einer Diktatur, sei es mit den vermutbaren Haltungen einer Bevölkerung, also auch seiner eigenen, auseinandersetzt. Hier scheint es weithin an Einsichtsfähigkeit zu fehlen, sonst könnte es nicht geschehen, daß selbst seriöseste "Quellen" zwischen überzeugten Nazis, Mitläufern und Überlebenstaktikern kaum unterscheiden. Man setzt ein Volk von Helden voraus für eine Situation, der man sich selbst nicht zu stellen hat.

Oder andersherum: Will man einem in diesen Wochen verstorbenen Bischof einen Vorwurf machen, von dem sein Nachfolger sagte, er habe jedem die Tür gewiesen, der ihn über ehemalige Nazis ausschnüffeln wollte, obwohl er selbst beträchtlich viel und seine Diözese noch mehr unter den Nazis zu leiden hatten. Gut, er war Bischof. Aber wenn sich – aus einem Akt des Verzeihens heraus – ein Privatmann ähnlich verhielte, hätte der von vorneherein die schlechtere politische Moral als wer politische Auseinandersetzung heute mit Vergangenheitsbewältigung bestreiten will? Werden nicht gerade so Vergangenheit und Gegenwart verzerrt?

#### Der Staat ja, aber die Parteien ...

Nicht minder problematisch und unter Umständen fataler, weil auf die res publica, auf das Gemeinwesen als solches bezogen, wirken andere Formen und Sektoren verzerrter Vergangenheitsbewältigung.

In den letzten Monaten konnte man angesichts der verschiedensten Affären und Skandale in Reden und Gesprächen über "politische Kultur" immer wieder das Argument hören, wenn die Bundesrepublik – Parallelen gab es auch in Österreich – so wenig politische Kultur entwickele, dann hänge das vor allem auch damit zusammen, daß der Nationalsozialismus alles an demokratischer politischer Kultur verdorben habe, bevor es sich überhaupt entfalten konnte. Dazu kommt das ebenso stete wie tiefe Komplexe bloßlegende Bedauern darüber, daß die Demokratie der Bundesrepublik kein deutsches Eigengewächs sei, sondern praktisch von den Siegermächten ins Land gebracht wurde.

Beides ist zwar nicht zu leugnen, auch wenn letzteres differenziert werden müßte. Aber bei jedem auftauchenden Krisensymptom geradezu zwanghaft an Geburtsfehler zu erinnern, könnte für die Zukunft des demokratischen Gemeinwesens ebenso gefährlich werden, wie wenn man sie als politisches Datum einfach übersieht. Vergangenheitsbewältigung ist ja nicht nur Verarbeitung des Nationalsozialismus, sondern Deutschland hat wie Osterreich eine sehr viel längere "Vorgeschichte" - auch des Nationalsozialismus, aber besonders des heutigen politischen Lebens. Und man könnte über Geburtsfehlern und oft nur scheinbar redlicher Vergangenheitsbewältigung leicht die Einschätzungs- und Verhaltensfehler gegenüber politischen Gemeinwesen jetzt übersehen. Anzeichen dafür gibt es genug gerade bei den professionellen Moralisten des Politischen.

Dazu gehört vor allem die Art der Auseinandersetzung mit dem tief eingewurzelten obrigkeitsstaatlichen Erbe, dazu gehört auch eine immer noch nicht überwundene Neigung zur ideellen wie moralischen Überhöhung des Staates bei gleichzeitiger Unterbewertung des Politischen als staatlich-gesellschaftlicher Entscheidungsfindung. Im ersten Fall treffen sich die emotionale Abwehr noch vorhandener Verhaltensweisen mit der Angst des einzelnen vor der sein Freiheitsbedürfnis kontrollierenden und ein-

Leitartikel

engenden Gesetzgebung. Im zweiten Fall taucht erst recht jenes in den Politiker als Führungsperson und Repräsentant des Staates projizierte Ich-Ideal auf, so in etwa nach dem Motto: Politik ist ein garstiges Geschäft, ich mache mir die Hände damit nicht schmutzig. Aber ich weiß, wie ein ideales Gemeinwesen auszusehen und zu funktionieren hat. Nur die vielen mittelmäßigen Politiker mit ihrer Unfähigkeit und ihrem schlechten Stil korrumpieren es.

Mitten da hinein gehört ein seltsam übersensibles Sichreiben an der wirklichen oder auch nur angeblichen Parteiendemokratie. Hierzulande sieht man nicht nur gerne über den "kleinen" Kanal, um die "feine englische Art" zu glorifizieren, die der kontinentale Durchschnittsbürger dann doch nur in eher verrotteter Form in Fußballstadien antrifft. Man schielt auch gerne über den "großen Teich", weil in den USA politische Parteien nur "Wahlvereine" sind, während sie bei uns als gefräßige Großorganisationen alles verschlingen, was es an öffentlicher Macht und an Einfluß gibt. Als ob die Systeme hüben und drüben auswechselbar wären, und als ob hier die Gewaltenteilung vor allem zwischen der zweiten und der "vierten", der politischen Exekutive und den Medien überhaupt nicht mehr funktionierte und nicht nur bei "Bild", sondern bei "Spiegel" und "Stern" und in öffentlich-rechtlichen Medien ohnehin lauter Regierungsfreunde oder Unionsdelegierte und ein andermal lauter SPD-Parteistrategen säßen.

Gewiß nimmt der Trend zur Parteiendemokratie insgesamt eher zu – obwohl die durch große und kleine Interessengruppen paralysierte Demokratie vermutlich für eine absehbare Zukunft die größere Gefahr ist. Aber wer wirklich wissen will, was eine Parteiendemokratie ist, sollte sich in wesentlich näheren Regionen umsehen – in Italien zum Beispiel.

#### Was eine Demokratie stabil macht

Aber nochmals zurück zur Sache: Was das politische Gemeinwesen hierzulande besonders braucht, ist vor allem mehr Sachlichkeit. Es gibt genügend Gegenwarts- und Zukunftsprobleme, über die in den Parlamenten und in den Medien zu streiten sich lohnt. Personalisierung, vor allem Personalisierung in einem destruktiven Sinne, ist billiger Politikersatz. Aber es braucht auch vor allem mehr Mut zu "nur" politischen Lösungen in wirklich durch Mehrheitsentscheidungen zu klärenden Fragen. Nirgends im westlichen Europa wird Politik gegenwärtig so sehr verrechtlicht und der Spielraum des Gesetzgebers so sehr eingeengt wie in der Bundesrepublik, als ob Staatsanwälte und Verfassungsrichter die stets weiseren Politiker wären.

Dazu gehört auch, daß den Parteien als Organen der politischen Willensbildung – ihre Funktion ist vom Grundgesetz ohnehin auffallend vorsichtig umschrieben – ihr Platz gelassen wird. (Übrigens zur Parteienfinanzierung: Warum sollen Parteien nicht gemeinnützigen Vereinen gleichgestellt sein? Ist die Finanzierung durch den Steuerzahler denn plausibler? Parteien sind doch keine Organe des Staates, wohl aber unersetzliche in den Staat hineinwirkende das Gemeinwesen mittragende politische Organisationen.) Natürlich braucht ihr Einfluß Grenzen und Gegengewichte. Aber ihre Grenzen mit Anspruch auf eine Art Allkompetenz überschreiten auch andere Organisationen mit politischem Gewicht: die Gewerkschaften, sogar die Kirchen.

Schließlich täte die Überwindung einer positiven wie negativen Idealisierung von Politikern nach reinen Sympathiewerten gut. Und auch selbstverständliches Rechnen mit Krisen, Affären und auch Stilbrüchen gehört zu einer Versachlichung politischer Prozesse. Hinter jeder Affäre Systemfehler und personelle Abgründe zu wittern oder mit Politikern gewohnheitsmäßig umzugehen, als ob sie keinen Anspruch auf Selbst- und Fremdachtung hätten, ist einer Demokratie nicht minder abträglich als nicht mit einer Ideal-, sondern nur Durchschnittsmoral ausgestattete Politiker. Politikergesichter in Medien für Psychostudien oder Physiognomiedemonstrationen zu benutzen, ist ebenso geschmacklos wie Spendenkumpanei. Die reine Hame am politischen Personal (sie ist jeweils nur die Kehrseite des Rufes nach dem starken Mann) ist nicht minder demokratieschädlich wie die Glorifizierung von politischen Idolen. Auch Politiker haben ein Anrecht darauf, nach Sachleistungen, äußerst kritisch, aber nach Sachleistungen am Gemeinwesen beurteilt zu werden. Alle anderen moralischen Maßstäbe in bezug auf Politik sind rational nicht begründbar.

Und schließlich gehört zur Demokratie, daß sie Ungleiches und so auch Überragendes nicht hervor-, aber zur Geltung bringt, daß sie aber auch mit Mittelmäßigem zu leben lernt. Wenn sie neben den Schmidts, Weizsäckers und Kreiskys, auch mit den Kohls und Sinowatz' einige Zeit zurechtkommt, ist an Staats-, Führer- und Monarchenkult vermutlich mehr bewältigt als durch noch so verdienstvollen politischen Stilpurismus.

Auch Männer in höchsten Staatsämtern, die während des Dritten Reiches keine Helden, aber auch keine Nazis waren, müssen zu verkraften sein, soweit sie sagen, was sie taten und soweit sie sich keiner offensichtlichen Verbrechen schuldig gemacht haben. Sie dürften so sogar mehr ; zur Aufarbeitung (nicht zur Bewältigung) der Vergangenheit beitragen als das scheinbar sichere Gefühl, im gesamten Gemeinwesen befänden sich nur reinrassig Unschuldige. Jedenfalls braucht einem dann um die nähere und fernere Zukunft der Demokratie trotz Geburtsfehlern und Affären weniger bange zu sein, als wenn wir von lauter Leuten regiert würden, die - jedenfalls für andere - immer schon wissen, was zu tun ist oder hätte getan werden müssen. Juden freilich sollten vor allem wir Christen nicht verübeln, wenn sie auch einmal auf nicht selbstlose Weise übergenau sind. Wir allesamt schulden ihnen zu vieles, was wir nicht nur nicht bewältigen, sondern auch nicht aufarbeiten können. David Seeber

Malcolm Hoenlein Executive Director



AUGUST 11, 1986

DEAR RABBI TANNENBAUM,

I THOUGHT THIS HOMILY DELIVERED BY CARDINAL O'CONNOR AT THE NATIONALLY TELEVISED STATUE OF LIBERTY CELEBRATION WOULD BE OF INTEREST.

BEST REGARDS.

# JULY 3, 1986 ST. PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL

Immediately following this Mass, several of us will be going out onto the Cathedral steps, and there we will begin the ringing of the bells, the replica of the Liberty Bell, the bells of St. Patrick's Cathedral. We hope that this ringing will be echoed and reechoed by churches across the land. When I spoke with our good friend, Rabbi Lookstein, the President of the New York Board of Rabbis, he told me that there are no bells in synagogues, but he promised to ring the burglar alarm instead. This is true ecumenical cooperation.

That the author of the inscription on the base of the Statue of Liberty was a Jew, Emma Lazarus, should suprise no one with a true sense of our national heritage.

"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these the homeless, the tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp outside the golden door."

These are Jewish words; these are words that could have come from the Old Testament. These are the words of a people who have known for tens of hundreds of years the weariness of being refugees. These are the words of a people who followed through the dark night the pillar of fire that led them from slavery to the Promised Land. These are the echo of the words of the great prophet Isaiah who spoke to and for God's suffering people in exile.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the broken hearted,
to proclaim liberty to captives,
and release to the prisoners,
to comfort all who mourn;
to place on those who mourn in Zion
a diadem instead of ashes,
to give them oil of gladness in place of mourning,
a glorious mantle instead of a listless spirit."

These words of Isaiah, read so beautifully today by Miss Helen Hayes, are the very words the Jewish Jesus applied to Himself as, conscious of His own heritage, He announced His message of liberation in the New Covenant, the New Covenant He was to forge between God and the entire human race.

We are here today as Jew and Gentile, Greek and Armenian, Irish and Polish and Italian, Korean, Asian, Hispanic, Muslim, Protestant, Catholic, of every nation, black, white, brown, yellow, red, man woman, child. Yet all, all of us are here as immigrants in our own persons, or in those of our ancestors. Even more, all of us are here as refugees, all exiles, all pilgrims, and unless we understand this reality we cannot understand ourselves as a people, or why we have the Statue of Liberty at all. How is this so? Neither theological nor political heresy is welcome from a pulpit, and particularly a pulpit so devoutly traditional as St. Patrick's. We claim innocence of either heresy, however, when we assert that our deep rooted political instinct as a people, that which has resulted in the very best of what we mean by the American way of life, that instinct, that mystery—symbolized for this past century by the Statue of Liberty—that mystery, that political instinct, finds its roots in a covenant that antedates our official political documents; including the Constitution and The Declaration of Independence, by twenty-five centuries and more. Not in Independence Hall was the idea first born that a people should be

free, nor in the minds of the Founding Fathers, or of the Lockes, or Rousseaus, or Bellermans, or Thomas Aquinas, before them, but in the hearts of the desert nomads we call the Israelites. Not in the Constitutional Convention was the promise of liberty first ratified but in the covenant God made with Moses on Mount Sinai.

Why do we belabor this point as we celebrate the two hundred and tenth anniversary of declaring ourselves a free people, and a hundred years of the Statue of Liberty in our harbor? Because celebrations of this sort, if they are to make sense, must provoke us to ask ourselves where we are today as a people, and where we are going; but the very term "where" implies relationship to a fixed point. Where are we in terms of where we have come from and why? Where are we going in terms of where we should be going, in terms of an ultimate goal? It's critical to remind ourselves that we are not merely a people of civil laws shaped in our daily activities, and in our ultimate destiny, by judicial interpretations of and amendments to the Constitution, precious though that document is. We are a covenant people in a pact with God and a compact with one another rooted in that pact with God, a pact, a compact, that permeates our very being as a nation and binds us to one another. There is no other way of explaining the uniqueness we call Others have attempted similar political experiments fashioned by America. political formulae not unlike our own, yet none has ever resulted in this uniqueness, this mystery, that we call America.

It's not by coincidence that before the Pilgrim Fathers disembarked from the good ship Mayflower in 1620 to our shores, they formulated the Mayflower Compact beginning with the words, "In the name of God, Amen," and spelled out its purposes in covenant terms. They were Christians, but rooted as all Christians, including Christ Himself, in the Old Testament, which was not abolished, but we

believe, brought into perfection in the New Covenant in Christianity. They saw themselves quite explicitly, the Pilgrim Fathers, as escaping from bondage to the promised land, a land in which they could breathe free only if faithful to their covenant with God, their compact with one another. Theirs, ours, is the political instinct that has continued for centuries and impels us today, an instinct more than two thousand years old. For even today, three and a half centuries after the Pilgrim Fathers, after countless legal and political formulations enacted in town halls and boroughs, in county seats and city and state legislatures and successive congresses of the United States, we can't have it any other way and still be America. American citizens we can be, by birth, by law, with a hundred million variances in our practices and beliefs, but we constitute America to the degree that we are a covenant people, that we have a pact with God, that grounds us in a compact with one another. This is deep within our national psyche, deep within our bones. It's for this reason, I believe with deep conviction, that we are proud or ashamed as a people, over the long course if not the short, when we are doing or not doing what we believe God expects of us.

We know that we can be proud and rejoice today, for example, in our incalculable generosity to the world at large. We have given great monies to feed the hungry, our lives to free the oppressed, but we know at the same time(and I point not to any political party or administration, and I exempt none), we know at the same time and we are not proud, that we have not always been above exploiting the weak or turning our backs on those in despair. We know that it would take days upon days to list our virtues and our honest accomplishments, but perhaps, an equal number of days to explain why millions are illiterate, millions more homeless or hungry, or in intolerable housing; too many blacks poorer than too many whites, too many black women poorer than anyone else, too many drugs, too much contempt

for human life, from life in the womb to life in the wheelchair, too much war, too much—much, much, too much—sheer materialism, and of such we are not proud for it violates our covenant with God, our compact with one another. We know in brief, or we sense at least vaguely, when we are constituting America as a people, and when we are unfaithful to America as an ideal, because deep within ourselves we know we are a covenant people with promises to keep.

And it matters to us, I believe it really matters to us, that this is the case, and I believe that something else matters as well, in part, because we are a mobile and a restless people, but more dominantly, I suspect, because our spiritual bloodlines, Jew and Christian, trace back to a people in the desert. We know that none of us has a lasting dwelling place on earth, and that one day we will all face Almighty God for all eternity. And on that day that comes for all of us as we know, we will recognize in full, that we are all of us, whatever our state in life, however proud, whatever our status, our prestige or the honors heaped upon us, we are all of us pilgrims, only pilgrims, all of us refugees in need of one another if we are to find our eternal promised land. And in that recognition, we will find the meaning, or perhaps even, the hidden terror of the words of Christ:

"Come you blessed of my Father, receive the kingdom prepared for you from all eternity, for I was hungry and you gave me to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. I was a stranger and you took me in, naked and you covered me, sick and you visited me. I was in prison and you came to me.' And then the just will answer him saying, 'Lord when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty, and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger, and take you in, or naked and clothe you, or when did we see you sick or in prison and come to you?' And answering he will say to us, 'As

long as you did it for one of the least of my children, you did it for me."

And such words are the essence of what we mean by the American way of life, by America itself, by the Statue of Liberty.

And now as a fellow pilgrim, permit to extend my personal gratitude and that of the entire Archdiocese of New York, to all who have had the vision to mark the centenary of the symbol of our pilgrimage that we call the Statue of Liberty, to give the Lady of the Lamp the face lifting and the refurbishing she so richly deserves after a century of guiding millions to our shores. It took many of those immigrants to build this great Cathedral of St. Patrick with their skilled hands, and this we can never forget. This Cathedral was planned by a man who was himself an immigrant who worked with his hands more than a century ago, a pilgrim, an immigrant from Ireland, Archbishop John Hughes. He planned this Cathedral to be in his words, "A Cathedral of suitable magnificence" for this magnificent city, and then depended on immigrants of every ethnic culture and nationality to bring it into being. It has taken many more of those immigrants and their sons and daughters to create our farms and build our skyscrapers, to act on our stages, teach in our schools, lead us in our worship, conduct the business of Government. Many of those immigrants, great grandfathers and grandmothers of our black brothers and sisters, came not of their own will, but nonetheless turned their own will to the shaping of our land, and the poorest of the poor would we be without them. Hispanics have come too, and Asians, lured and guided by her light even though not passing our New York shores.

I'll be forgiven a touch of Catholic pride, I trust, in such very special immigrants as Mother St. Francis Cabrini, Italian immigrant, Black Haitian, Pierre Toussaint, Cuban Father Felix Varela, all of whom did so very much for the poor.

The first, Frances Cabrini, has been canonized. We are currently praying that Toussaint and Varela will soon be canonized as well.

And as fellow pilgrims also, and on behalf of the Archdiocese against whose shores and in whose harbor the lady that Emma Lazarus calls "Mother of Exiles" has stood for a century, I presume to thank the French authorities and their people. How typical of America, that a statue of welcome to strangers given her by France, for centuries accorded the title, "Eldest Daughter of the Church," should be inscribed with the thrilling words wrought in the heart of a Jew. I thank all of you for being here, and in a very special way, you my brothers and sisters of other churches, you bishops, you clergy, whom time will not permit me to name, my gratitude for your being here is unlimited. As is my gratitude to all of you for beginning this celebration in clear recognition that America is what she is because we are a covenant people, one in our pact with God, in our compact with one another rooted in our pact with God, whatever our differences. Our Catholic faith teaches us, us who believe, that this Mass brings into being the reality that a piece of bread will become the Body of Christ, a cup of wine His Blood. The appearances of bread and wine remain, but we believe that divine life replaces the substance of the bread and the wine. And for those of us who so believe, and for those of us who do not believe, for all Americans, and for all that constitutes America, it is my prayer today, that while we may appear to be the same after our celebration as before, beneath the surface we will have been revitalized, renewed as the Statue of Liberty herself, rededicated by a new commitment to our ideals as a covenant people.

And finally I pray, and am presumptuous enough to ask you to pray, that however crowded our land becomes, however limited the opportunity for employment may seem, however strapped our resources, the back of the Statue of Liberty will never be turned on those in greater need than are we, its lamp never extinguished. The words of Emma Lazarus with their poignant promise to the tired and the poor, their welcome to the wretched, will never be made hollow-sounding, brass tinkling symbols, lost in the winds that how through the darkness of our shores. Rather, let the haunting story of the great prophet of the Apocalypse, Elie Wiesel, keep us ever mindful of who we are as a people of God and why.

#### I tell that story in his words:

"Rabbi Hananiah ben Teradyon was one of the Ten Martyrs of the faith in Roman times. In those days to teach the Torah or to study it meant capital punishment. Rabbi Hananiah decided to teach the Torah not clandestinely but in the marketplace. Naturally he was arrested, and the Romans sentenced him to be burned. They wrapped him in the Torah, in the scrolls and lit the fire."

"And then comes a very beautiful passage in the Talmud, one that we recite every Yom Kippur," says Elie Wiesel.

"As he was burning, his disciples said, 'Rabbi, tell us what you see.' His answer became a classic. 'What do I see? The parchments are burning, the parchments are burning, but the letters remain, the letters remain alive, the letters are indestructable."

May the letters that form the words of Emma Lazarus' inscription be equally indestructable, etched not merely in the base of the Statue, but in the very heart of America 'til the end of time, for all to see and to believe by the light of the

Torch of Liberty she holds.

Give my your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free.
Your wretched refuse from the teeming shore.
Send these, the tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp, beside the golden door.



# REGARDS X

REVUE JUIVE DE BELGIQUE (fondée en 1965) Bimensuel du Centre Communautaire et Laïc Juif n° 151 du 5 au 18 décembre 1985 (22 Kislev - 6 Tevet 5746) Prix de vente; 50 FB.

# SPECIAL REPORT A Carmelite nunnery in Auschwitz

# J'IRAI PRIER SUR VOS CENDRES

Un couvent de carmélites : \*\* à Auschwitz \*\*

#### IS THE SHOAH A JEWISH AFFAIR ?

August 1, 1984. Following an agreement between local Polish authorities and Franciszek Cardinal Macharski, Archbishop of Cracow, a Carmelite convent is established in a derelict building at the former concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau (doc. 1). No Jewish organization is consulted and no organization has subsequently been informed, although Auschwitz-Birkenau is known worldwide as the foremost symbol of the Shoah.

October 1985. Belgian Jewry learns about the existence of the convent at Auschwitz through the Bulletin of <u>Aide à l'Eglise en Détresse</u> (AED - Aid to the Church in Distress), a Catholic organization known for its extreme right-wing orientation (doc. 2). As this Bulletin puts it, the Auschwitz Carmelite convent

"bears testimony to the victorious power of the Cross of Jesus... It will become a pledge for the conversion of our errant brothers..." (i.e. the Jews ?).

Despite the Catholic authorities's denial - including Cardinal Macharski's - that AED played any role in this affair, Alain Galichon, a Vatican spokesman, recently indicated that those responsible for the establishment of the Auschwitz convent are: Cardinal Macharski and Father Werenfried Van Straaten (AED founder and spiritual leader).

As a result of investigations in Auschwitz, Cracow and Warsaw by the Belgian Jewish magazine <u>Regards</u>, a delegation of four Belgian Jewish leaders (\*) met with Cardinal Macharski in Cracow on February 17, 1986. The Belgian delegation's report to the World Jewish Congress reads in

(\*) Rabbi Albert Guigui (Belgian Central Jewish Consistory), Nathan Ramet (Antwerp Jewish Congregations), David Susskind (Jewish Secular Community Center, Brussels), Markus Pardes (Chairman of the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations).

part:

"Following extremely intense and sensitive discussions, we consider that there would be only a chance of having the Carmelite convent moved if there is a sustained international pressure on Cardinal Macharski and the Vatican from Jewish organizations and communities and from our Catholic friends".

Three days later, on February 20, the Vatican official daily newspaper, <u>L'Osservatore Romano</u>, issued a declaration by Cardinal Macharski stating that:

"The former concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau is, in a sense, a new "holy place" belonging equally to all mankind and every nation... The Carmelite convent recalls that the Catholic Church pursues its tasks using various pastoral methods" (doc. 3).

This firm position confirms the conclusion of the Belgian Jewish delegation that concerted pressure is necessary if there is to be a chance of modifying the views of the Church authorities.

Jewish organizations and leaders in Europe and in the rest of the world have strongly protested against the establishment of the Auschwitz Carmelite convent. These include the Chief Rabbis of France, Britain, Romania, Swizzerland, The Representative Council of French Jews (CRIF) (doc. 4) and the Alliance Israélite Universelles, the World Jewish Congress (doc. 5), etc. Among the non-Jewish moral and political authorities to have joined the protest are the international bodies representing the Gipsies (doc. 6), Cardinal Decourtray, Archbishop of Lyon, France (doc. 7), etc. Many articles have appeared in the European press and the protest campaign has begun to have an impact on public opinion.

We believe that the Jews of the United States and Canada have a fondamental role to play in resisting this attempt to deliterate the memory of the Shoah. Together with Jews all over the world, Jewish communities in North America are putting pressure on the Polish government and the Catholic Church to move the convent away from Auschwitz. It must be understood everywhere that this Carmelite convent is an

offense against the memory of our six million Kedoshim. It undermines the universal significance of the Shoah. If we allow our past to be thus attacked what hope is there for our future?

Bernard SUCHECKY

Editor of Regards

David SUSSKIND

Chairman of the Jewish Secular Community Center (CCLJ), Brussels







Aerial photograph made by American planes on mission over Auschwitz-Birkenau, April 1944. The white arrow shows the building (the "Theater") where the Carmelite convent has been established.

#### Votre don au Pape: un couvent à Auschwitz

Immédiatement avant la deuxième guerre mondiale, le gros œuvre du théâtre municipal d'Auschwitz était achevé. On n'y a jamais donné de représentation, si ce n'est le drame de quatre millions d'innocents qui sont morts ici. Les nazis confisquèrent le théâtre et en firent un dépôt de gaz dont ils avaient besoin pour leur hécatombe.

Le bâtiment sombre se trouve tout près du "mur de la mort" et du block 2 où Maximilien Kolbe mourut comme martyr. Sœur Bénédicte de la Croix et Edith Stein également y trouvèrent, en plus de la mort, la vie éternelle.

Après de longues tractations, le magasin a été prêté aux carmélites déchaussées. Elles obtinrent la permission de transformer l'intérieur en couvent. Ainsi, de ce lieu, jadis point de départ de la mort, rayonnera une vie





Le couvent des carmélites à Auschwitz: construit comme théâtre, maudit comme dépôt de gaz toxique, béni comme foyer d'amour, de prière et de réconciliation. Ce sera votre don au Saint-Père.

nouvelle. Huit carmélites habitent déjà l'endroit froid et désolé. Jour et nuit, elles ont devant les yeux des millions de morts, elles prient et font pénitence pour nous qui sommes encore en vie, et elles construisent de leurs mains le signe sacré de l'amour, de la paix et de la réconcillation qui témoignera de la puissance victorieuse de la Croix de Jésus.

Notre Œuvre qui, à la demande du cardinal Wyszynski, a déjà accepté le patronage de soixante couvents de contemplatives en Pologne, veut pourvoir aussi à ce qui manque encore au nouveau carmel d'Auschwitz.

Après la visite du Pape, nous voulons, comme don de nos bienfaiteurs du Benelux, lui remettre la somme nécessaire pour l'achèvement de ce couvent qui deviendra une forteresse spirituelle, un gage de la conversion des frères égarés de nos pays et une preuve de notre bonne volonté pour effacer l'outrage dont le Vicaire du Christ est si souvent l'objet... Voulezvous participer à cette offrande ? Versez votre don en mentionnant: Un couvent pour le Pape!



La porte de l'enfer devient celle du ciel.

Votre don: En BELGIQUE: 196-0093341-82 Alde à l'Eglise en Détresse - 46, rue Joseph Vrindts, 4020 LIEGE - Tél. 041/41.39.53. Si vous désirez obtenir un dégrèvement fiscal (pour tout don de 1.000 FB et plus), veuillez verser votre don à notre Œuvre filiale AIDE ET ES POIR A.S.B.L., 3180 Westerlo, au compte 196-0135761-16. Des dons moindres au courant de la même année peuvent être additionnés jusqu'à la somme de 1.000 FB et plus pour obtenir la même attestation. Au LUXEM-BOURG: CCP 26194-04 KIN/OPH, Oevelsedreef 1, B-3180 WESTERLO - Tél. 00 32 14/ 54.40.54 - Nous vous demandons de bien vouloir mentionner votre numéro de bienfalteur, lors de toute correspondance, versement ou changement d'adresse. Rédaction: KIN/ OPH e.V., Internat. Informationsdienst, KÖ-NIGSTEIN Deutschland - Ed. resp.: W. Van Straaten, o. praem., Postfach 1209, D-6240 KÖNIGSTEIN 1 - Pour la Belgique: Oevelsedreef 1, B-3180 WESTERLO - Ab. 8 no: 35 FB -35 LF - De ilcentia competentia auctoritatis

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Ceci deviendra le cœur et le sanctuaire du couvent. Là où, jadis, le Méchant cracha du poison pour détruire des vies, l'Esprit de Dieu élit Sa demeure pour remplir de vie la terre entière.



Cette fillette met sa petite main dans la main de l'homme qui chemine avec Dieu. Il n'y a pas trace d'orgueil ou de désobéissance en elle.

Puissions-nous tous mettre notre main dans celle du Saint-Père avec autant de confiance que cette enfant! UN'OMELIA DEL CARDINALE MACHARSKI, 'ARCIVESCOVO DI CRACOVIA-

# Nel campo di sterminio un convento segno di un amore più forte del male

- 1. Il convento delle Carmelitane ad Auschwitz costituisce uno dei modi in cui la Chiesa in Polonta vuole rispondere alla sjida lanciata dal campo nazista di sterminio di Auschwitz-Birkenau. Nell'omelia pronunciata il 7 giugno 1979 sul territorio dell'ex campo di Birkenau, il Santo Padre, Giovanni Paolo II, presentò i contenuti principali di questa a risposta ». Ne rilevò sia l'importanza per tutta l'umanità, sia la particolare dimensione spirituale e religiosa.
- 2. Si tratta prima di tutto di ricordare l'eccidio di Auschvoltz. Il
  suo ricordo deve imprimersi sempre di muovo anche sulla dimensione religiosa delle coscienze. Deve
  essere continuamente rinnovato,
  poiché oltre al passar del tempo
  c'è chi tenta coscientemente di cancellare o di alterare questi terribili
  fatti. Se venissero dimenticati non
  ci sarebbe più ne l'avvertimento,
  ne l'ammonizione.
- 3. Lo sterminio di Auschwitz fu una tragedia per tutta l'umanità. Una tragedia per molte nazioni.

#### Un «luogo sacro»

#### per l'umanità

L'ex campo di Auschwitz-Birkenau è in un certo senso un nuovo « luogo sacro » che appartiene indistintamente a tutta l'umanità ad ogni popolo. Giovanni Paolo II, nel suo discorso del 1979 pronuncia to a Birkenau, tra molti popoli ne nominò tre: quello coreo, quello popoli ne russo e quello polacco. La tragedia del popolo ebreo è terrificante non solo per le dimensioni quantitative ma anche per il fatto che il razzi smo nazista aveva condannato questo popolo allo sterminio immedia to e totale (un trattamento simile ebbero, forse, solianto gli zingari). Il più noto simbolo di questo sterminio sono i campi di concentramento di Majdanek e di Birkenau scali ferroviari, camere a gas, forni crematori, cataste. Tutto ciò non può essere dimenticato.

I popoli slavi erano condamnati dal razzismo nazista alla schiaviti e al decadimento culturale e biologico iniziato durante la guerra. Per i polacchi Auschwitz è sinonimo di sofferenze è di sterminio che toccarono la maggior parte delle famiglic. Gli ez prigionieri, segnati dai numeri tatuati, vivono tra noi. C'è molta letteratura in merito che comprende memorie e studi scientifici (sopratiutto e I fascicoli di Auschmitz dell'Associazione Polacca

Tra le memorie delle più atroci violenze complute dall'uomo sull'umo un segno che l'amore è possibile ed è più forte del male:
questo è il convento delle Carmelitane scalze ad Auschwitz. Lo ha
affermato il Cardinale Franciszek Macharski, Arcivescovo di Cracovia
nel cui territorio sorge il famigerato campo di sterminio nazista, in
un'omella tenuta il 14 gennalo scorso. Ricordando l'olocausto del popolo ebreo e i milioni di esseri umani di fede e nazione diversa che
furono ucclai, il Cardinale ha sottolineato come i campi di sterminio
debbano restare ancor oggi come memoria storica della guerra, dell'odio, della crudeità e della distruzione, ma anche come « eloquente
esortazione alla pace». Per questo, riaffermando il proprio appoggio
di sterminio, sottolinea che in essa al esprime l'impegno della Calesa
nel promuovere la pace tra tutti il popoli e pregare per l'esplazione
dei delitti commessi. Dell'omelia tenuta dal Cardinale Macharski pubblichiamo una nostra traduzione.

dei Medici», ncl 1985 è stato pubblicato il numero 25).

4. La tragica problematica del campo di sterminio di Auschwitz-Birkenau diventa ancor più com-plessa se si considera il fatto che esso fu l'opera della Germania na-zista Auschwitz è sinonimo dell'ec-cidio compiuto dalla Germania anche sul popolo polacco. E' anche luogo di pellegrinaggio per i tede-schi: deve esserlo affinché la generazione dei più anziani non di-mentichi e la nuova generazione possa conoscere la verità! Esso è in particolare luogo d'incontro tra polacchi e tedeschi, dove vengono promossi continuamente tentativi ricordare i cosiddetti Seminari di Auschwitz, organizzati da «Tygodnik Pouszechnys (a Settimanale Universales) e dai cattolici tede-schi dell'a Aktion Suehnzeichens; le visite dei Vescovi tedeschi nelle baracche e davanti il muro delle esecuzioni, compiute nel 1981 e 1983: le molte enunciazioni fatte dal Cardinale Karol Wojtyla prima del 1978 e il noto brano della sua omelia pronunciata già da Papa a Birkenau nel 1979; nonché i discorsi dell'attuale Arcivescopo di Cracovia, per esempio quelli di Düssel-dorj del 1981 e di Vienna del 1984.

#### Un'esortazione

#### alla pace

5. Il campo di sterminio è anche testimonianza della guerra, cioè dell'odio, della crudeltà e della di struzione. E' la più eloquente esortazione alla pace. Auschwitz Birkernau si colloca tra altre due città, Hiroshima e Nagasaki, e tutte testimoniano le più grandi sciagure dell'umanità provocate dalla guerra. La Chiesa proclama oggi ad Auschwitz, nel modo ad essa proprio, il

tema della pace, opponendosi alla guerra e difendendo l'uomo.

6. Anche la Chiesa cattolica venera molto profondamente il sacrificio dei quattro milioni di persone di varie religioni ed ideologie: uomini, donne, bambini. Siamo certi dell'esistenza di molti eroi senza nome che con la loro umanità riportarono la vittoria sul sistema che negava la dignità e i diritti dell'uomo.

#### Massimiliano Kolbe

#### e Edith Stein

Tra le numerose vittime di cul si conoscono i nomi la Chiesa cattolica venera due persone, attraverso le quali rende omaggio a tutte le 
oltre. La prima è Padre Massimiano M. Kolbe, sacerdote polacco, 
frate francescano. Egli donò volontariamente la propria vita nel e bunter della fame e per sabare un padre di famiglia. Morì infatti nella 
cosiddetta e baracca della morte e, 
dopo molli giorni di sofferenze provocate dalla fame, ucciso con una 
intezione di fenolo. Padre Kolbe è 
stato beatificato nel 1971 e canonizzato nel 1982.

La seconda persona è Edith Stein, ebrea tedesca, illustre filosofa, suora carmelltana. Arrestata in Ulanda, fu uccisa nel campo di concentramento di Birkenau. E' in corso il suo processo di beatificazione.

1. L'idea di collocare il convento delle Carmelitane ad Auschwitz non provinti delle Carmelitane ad Auschwitz non provinti di campi di concentramento e ai luoghi di esecuzione, per esempio a Dachau in Germania Occidentale. Le suore polacche dell'Orcime delle Carmelitane Scalze desideravano in un modo particolare esprimere così la loro comunione con la loro sorella, Edith Stein.

Esse, secondo la loro regola, vivono in clausura, dedicandosi alla preghiera e al sacrificio espiatorio per i delitti commessi nel campo di Auschwitz-Birkenau e a favore della pace e dell'unità nel mondo. Bisogna riconoscere obiettivamente la grandezza spirituale della decisione di queste religiose, con la quale esse si autocondannano, in un certo senso, ad una permanenza continua nelle vicinanze del huopo dove avvenne l'orribile genocidio. La loro presenza servirà a mostra che l'amore è possibile, che è più forte del male. Sono queste le ragioni sottoposte all'esame sia della comunità dei Jedeli dell'Arcidiocesi di Cracovia.

#### Testimoni di vita

#### dove era la morte

8. Nel 1984 le suore Carmelitane ottennero il permesso delle Autorità di collocare il convento ad Auschwitz, fuori dell'ez campo di concentramento. Chiesero quindi di poter sistemare il loro comento vicino alla e baracca XI s, dove si trovava il e bunker della fame s, luogo della morte di molte vittime, tra cui San Massimiliano Kolbe. E' stato trovato un edificio costruito prima della prima guerra mondiale, chiamato il evecchio teatro » che poteva servire a tale scopo dopo previo adattamento. Dal 1614 questo ciliticio non avere mai avuto una funzione precisa e per decine di anni è stato utilizza-to come magazzino. Esternamente non doveva subire nessuna modifica.

#### I grandi compiti

#### dei cattolici

Il convento si trasferì nel suddetto edificio nell'antiunno del 1984. L'Arcivescovo di Cracovia ne informò l'Arcidiocesi con la lettera del 20 settembre 1984.

9. Nell'ampio ma non esauriente siudio della complessa problematica del campo di concentramento di Auschvilz-Birkenau si trovano le ragioni che hanno spinto le suore carmelitane a collocare il loro convento ad Auschvilz e l'Arcivescovo di Cracovia a dar loro di suo appogio. Queste ragioni, spiegano anche il nostro modo di intendere i grandi compiti dei cattolici di fronte all'eredità lascialdici dal campi di concentramento. Il convento delle carmelitane è simbolo di questi compiti; ricorda che la Chiesa cattolica che è in Polonia e nel mondo deve assumerli servendosi dei diversi metodi pastorali.



#### CONSEIL REPRÉSENTATIF DES INSTITUTIONS JUIVES DE FRANCE

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Paris, le 13 Mars 1986

Son Excellence Angelo Felici Archevèque Titulaire de Caesariania La Nonciature Apostolique 10, Avenue du Président Wilson 75116 PARIS

# ARCHIVES

Excellence,

Après la récente démarche de la Communauté Juive de Belgique auprès de Monsieur le Cardinal Macharski, Archevèque de Cracovie, nous venons, à notre tour, en mémoire des 76000 juifs déportés de France, dont, seuls 2500 ont survécu, et au nom des Institutions Juives de France, prier Votre Excellence, avec respect mais avec fermeté, de transmettre notre demande instante de voir reconsidérer la situation créée par l'installation d'un couvent de Carmélites à la limite du Camp d'Auschwitz.

Quelle que soit l'intention qui a conduit à cette initiative, et quels que soient les sentiments qui animent celles qui se vouent ainsi à la prière et, peut-être, à la repentance, notre devoir est d'attirer Votre Haute attention sur le très profond malaise ressenti par notre Communauté.

Auschwitz est devenu le Haut lieu de la SHOA.

D'autres, nous le savons, ont souffert, ont été meurtris et assassinés par le nazisme, mais c'est le martyr incommensurable des juifs qui a marqué ce lieu du signe de l'indicible souffrance d'hommes, de femmes et d'enfants, abandonnés par l'humanité à la technologie de la mort industrielle.

Rien ne peut effacer le fait que c'est eux qui sont morts là-bas, parce qu'ils étaient juifs et - parce qu'ils l'étaient - dans l'indifférence des gouvernements et des hiérarchies religieuses.

#### DOCUMENT 4 (continued)

Aujourd'hui, ils ont droit à ce silence dont ils ont profondément souffert alors qu'un cri pouvait peut être les sauver, sûrement, leur faire sentir que, dans leur marche inexorable et hallucinante vers la mort, ils n'étaient pas seuls. Que quelqu'un se souciait d'eux.

Il est trop tard, Excellence, pour le repentir sur les lieux du crime. Le ciel alors était vide, il doit le rester.

Que chacun vienne prier ou méditer selon sa croyance, selon son rite, selon son coeur, selon sa conscience, sur cette terre gorgée de vies perdues.

Ne laissez pas jeter une ombre, fut-elle celle de la Croix, sur le champ immense de notre inapaisable douleur.

Croyez, Excellence, à l'assurance de notre très haute et respectueuse considération.

in. Aleir

Draft Resolution

No. 8

30 January 1986

#### THE CARMELITE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ

I

The Eighth Plenary Assembly of the World Jewish Congress, meeting in Jerusalem, 27-30 January, 1986,

II

Calls on the Carmelites to desist from the proposed construction of a Carmelite convent on the grounds of Auschwitz. The ground of Auschwitz has been hallowed by the blood of many martyrs of all faiths, including that of millions of our fellow Jews,

III

Believes that no one group or faith should establish itself on this ground. Such an action, however well-intentioned, would create profound anguish, misunderstanding and resentment at a place that for the Jewish people will forever symbolize the tragedy of the Shoah, and

IV

Urges Catholics everywhere to join it in this appeal.

#### CENTRE CULTUREL ROM

SUBVENTIONNÉ PAR LE MINISTÈRE DE LA CULTURE

143, Avenue du Président Wilson - 93320 PAVILLONS / sous / BOIS

₡ 848-36-66

### AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

Après consultation de leurs membres dirigeants et responsables, les organisations tziganes, à savoir le COMITE IN-TERNATIONAL ROM, le COMITE ROM DE FRANCE, la COMMISSION DES DROITS HUMAINS DU PEPULE ROM, L'ASSOCIATION NATIONALE DES GITANS-KALE DE FRANCE (fédérées au sein du C.I.R.-ROMANI-UNION, reconnues par l'ECOSOC des Nations-Unies, depuis 1979), dénoncent l'installation d'un couvent de Carmélites sur la terre devenue sacrée d'AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU où périrent des milliers de leurs frères roms.

D'autre part, le CENTRE CULTUREL ROM, qui vient de se voir confier le soin d'élever le monument du MARTYRE TZIGANE, en France, en souvenir des 35.000 martyrs roms français sur un holocauste de plus de 600.000 des nôtres, proteste également contre l'installation de ce couvent à AUSCHWITZ, rappelant que cette terre appartient désormais à tous les hommes, de toutes nationalités sans distinction religieuse et qu'il est inadmissible qu'une religion particulière en annexe une partie.

Mgr. Decourtray, Archbishop of Lyon, France, to the French radio FRANCE INTER, Dec. 6, '85:

"...The Nazi barbarity that struck Auschwitz struck the Jewish People above all, even if others were also in Auschwitz. For myself and for world public opinion Auschwitz is the symbol of the attempt at total extermination of the Jews, which is called the Shoah. Such an experience has given the Jewish People, through its Martyrs, a particular dignity that belongs to it only. To build a Carmelite convent in the concentration camp of Auschwitz would mean a threat to this very dignity. I will do everything to see that the Jewish People is respected everywhere, includint in Auschwitz".