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Box 20, Folder 5, French bishop's declaration, 1973.



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Abraham Karlikow, European Director

FO-Eur
June 22, 1973

To: Marc Tanenbaum
From: Achariah Shuster
Subj: French Bishops' Declaration.

The declaration of French Bishops on attitudes towards Jews has, as you know, provoked many comments and reactions from various quarters, both on political and religious grounds. The politically hostile reactions came primarily from lay and religious circles in the Middle East and concerned the subject of Israel but a great deal of the opposition was based also on theological grounds and concentrated on the passages in the declaration which directly or indirectly aimed to counteract the deeply rooted belief in Christian theology that Christianity has surpassed Judaism.

One of the more significant comments was made by Father Yves Congar, one of the leading contemporary Catholic theologians, who is known for his profound reasoning and who served in Rome during the Vatican Council II as one of the experts. His comments on the declaration were published in the Paris Catholic daily, La Croix, of which a full translation is enclosed.

I suggest a careful study of this comment for it expresses some of the basic dilemmas faced by Catholic clergymen and theologians with regard to the changing attitude towards Judaism. The dilemma is how to reconcile a positive evaluation of Judaism with the old Christian tenet that Christianity assumed the vocation of Judaism. Congar is obviously also struggling with this dilemma and so are many others.

No Vatican body has yet acted on the document of the French Bishops and, according to the latest information, probably nothing will happen until the summer vacations are over.

c.c. Mr. Gold
Dr. Lachman

Enclosure.

Translation from La Croix, June 16, 1973.

The Episcopal Document on the Jews: An Effort for Better Understanding. by Yves Congar, op.

It is a fact that the document issued by the Episcopal Committee for Relations with Judaism concerning the attitudes of Christians towards Jews has provoked numerous reactions and some criticism. We think that one or the other formula of this document calls for explanations and we shall pose, in full loyalty and confidence, certain questions with regard to them. From the discussions and explanations provided up to now it is evident that this text in a superficial reading reveals neither its nuances, nor its richness. But these difficulties should not obscure its total sense, nor the novelty and impact of the entire document which wanted to be, and which is, primarily, and act, an event.

It is true that the text touches upon delicate points of exegesis without going into them more deeply. Some excellent exegetes have declared their accord; but others remain reticent with regard to some of the formulas. They should be allowed to continue the arguments but it is not on this plane that the document is situated. The document is placed before the present reality of Judaism, in the situation in which it finds itself today, thirty years after the abominable massacre which the Jews call Holocaust. It has been said: "Never again" and in order that this should not be made possible, as far as it depends on us, it has been established along the lines taken by John XXIII, Cardinal Bea and the Concil, a truly Christian attitude of respect, esteem and love.

Jean-Paul Sartre advanced the paradox that anti-Semitism has made the Jew. Being rejected by others, by Christians, the Jews discover themselves as being Jews. The historical reality is different. There existed a pagan pre-Christian anti-Semitism, motivated by the fact that Jews were turning out to be inassimilable and insisting on their particular being. The Bishops of the Committee say to the Jews: "You have our esteem, we love you as you are." Obviously, one must think and admit that a convinced Christian, a Bishop, cannot but wish that Jews recognize Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah --- the Messiah which Israel had as its vocation to give to the world --- and as the son of God. This was the confession of Peter, the first efflorescence of the Church on Jewish soil. (Matt. 16, 18.)

But the Bishops say, and we say with them, that beyond this demarche of faith, of which liberty of conscience is an indispensable condition, we esteem and love the adherents of the Jewish religion and their fidelity. No one who has had the

.../...

privilege of entering into contact with such faithful ones will not deny having received much, and, in the real sense of the word, of having been "edified."

One of the contributions, perhaps the principal contribution of the Episcopal document, consists precisely in the recognition of a positively profound value of Judaism after the arrival of the one whom we recognize as God. In doing this, the Episcopal text opens a new possibility of dialogue. By interrogating the Christians, by posing to them questions on a point which touches so closely their conviction of faith, it also evokes among the Jews, as was recently said by Rabbi Grunewald of Strasbourg, the need to question themselves, on their side, with regard to the religious significance of Christianity.

It is in this respect that the document goes further than Nostra Aetate, the Concil document of October 28, 1965, and even further than all of the Fathers of the Church who are dear to the present writer. But it is also one of the two major points on which the Episcopal document was criticized.

There is obviously the spontaneous accusation made by the Arabs and in a most passionate manner by Christian Arabs, who form the largest part of the faithfuls of Palestine. For us Jew signifies "Jew"? there "Jew" signifies "Zionist" which means a conqueror endowed today with powerful means of conquest.

Not only in Arab circles one has interpreted the three paragraphs of Section V of the document as recognizing a theological legitimization of the existence of the State of Israel. Well, this was the position of the late Jacques Maritain but it is not that of the Episcopal document. The first paragraph simply says that one cannot "forget, as Christians, the gift once made by God to the people of Israel, of a land on which it was called to gather." This is followed by references to biblical texts, that no Christian, indeed, can ignore.

This passage does not imply that the present return to the land which has taken the form of the State of Israel is justified by the quoted text. One can neither justify Zionism in the name of promises, nor justify the opposition to the existence of the State of Israel the fact that these promises are no longer valid. The second paragraph does not permit any ambiguities. It is the third paragraph that expressly refers to the present "return" of numerous Jews to Palestine.

The document recognizes the legitimacy of the desire of the Jewish people to form itself as a "nation," and this obviously means Palestine. But the document abstains from stating the grounds upon which this legitimacy exists: promises, conquests, sales, international agreements. It simply says that considering what has been the condition of the Jewish people in the course of its history "universal conscience cannot refuse this to him."

This is not a theological legitimation... furthermore, it does not say what form can or ought to take this "proper political existence": A Jewish State, co-sovereignty with Jordan, federation.... Finally it asserts the right of those --- this obviously refers to the Arabs --- who occupied the land before the Zionist enterprise and that they too must have their proper political existence. "The rights and the possibilities of existence --- the same as those recognized for the Jewish people --- cannot be refused to those who are at present victims of grave situations of injustice." This is clear enough.

The Role of the Jewish People in the History of Salvation.

Should one speak of Judaism as something which designates religion or the Jewish people? The latter includes many members without faith or religious practice. The Episcopal document speaks as though it was unaware of this fact. However, it is also true that one can never speak adequately of Jews outside of a religious perspective, for they belong to a people who is marked as such in a special way and with a religious mark by its origin and its nature.

Let us therefore talk either of Judaism or of the Jewish people as is done by our document. There are two series of affirmations which create difficulties and, while waiting for a qualified commentary, we would like to propose a possible interpretation which we have gained from various studies and exchanges of views.

"The Jewish people has not been deprived of its election." "The first Alliance has not become invalidated by the new one." This is supported by a reference to Genesis 17, 7, ("the Eternal Alliance": "Perpetual" says the Bible of Jerusalem) and in Romans 11, 29 ("irrevocable appeal"). The document attributes a proper mission to the Jewish people in God's design after the Incarnation and Passover: "The Jewish people is conscious of having received a universal mission vis-à-vis the nations." In this respect it remains the sacerdotal people which is spoken of in Exodus 19, 6.

Can one say that there exist two parallel systems of salvation, the one of the sinaitic alliance and the Law, and the other one in the faith in Jesus Christ? This would be contrary to the most formal teachings of the New Testament. This really would be as is said by F. Biot, "to put in danger the faith in Jesus Christ"; this would really be "changing" faith.*

*P.G. Fessart writes (France Catholique, June 1, 1973, p.10) "When they (the Bishops) declare that the long march of Christian conscience ought to lead to a new look on the Jewish people, not only in the order of human relations but also in the order of faith," they don't want to change the faith but simply demand

Which is excluded, not only by the confidence which we have in the Bishops responsible for the Document, but by their very text: "Israel and the Church are not complementary institutions." (VII b)

This signifies that for us Judaism, by the fact of Jesus Christ, has been surpassed as a religious regime of salvation. The Abrahamic Alliance has been assumed --- and in this sense it has not become invalid because it is always alive --- by Jesus Christ. But its Mosaic translation in "Law" is no more the form of salvation objectively announced and offered to men by the Church. "The Law was given by Moses; Grace and Truth have come to us from Jesus Christ." (Jn 1, 17.)

This by no means signifies that Jews who practice the Law in non-guilty ignorance of what is truly Jesus Christ, cannot be saved, in and by the practice of their religion, in a manner analogous to the one (of which any adept of any religion can, in non-guilty ignorance of the real faith, make his salvation in and by the practice of his religion. But in an analogous fashion, because the case of the Jews is always a particular one.

Even when one is ignorant, one is not saved, and thus personally elected for salvation as in and by Jesus Christ. But saying this one has yet not said everything that the Scriptures, the Old and New Testament, permit and impose upon us to say on the subject of the Jewish people. P.G. Fessard has just said it again in searching within the frame of his vision of history, and of its categories, a connection to the affirmations of Saint Paul in the Epistle to the Romans.

It is thus not a question of personal salvation but of the history of humanity as God is guiding it towards eschatology, that means to its final end. By the definitively acquired intervention of God in this history (Rm 11, 29), humanity is divided among Jews and "nations" (in Hebrew, goyim; in Latin, gentes). This duality is surmounted only in Jesus Christ and will not be effaced by humanity until the end. The result is that the election of Israel has introduced into history a structure of which Saint Paul notes the permanence in the time of the Church, as long as the fulfillment has not been reached. This permanence belongs to the design of God, it must have its sense not only on the sociological plane but also on the theological one.

that the understanding of the faith penetrates more in the attitude and behavior of Christians." It would have been more simple to say "not only in the order of human relations but in that of religious appreciation."

It is not easy to make more precise this sense. The document tries discreetly to do it but seems to want primarily to alert Christians to the conviction that there is something profound and sacred, and to pose the question "What is the mission of the Jewish people in God's plan"? Perhaps it would be better to say "the vocation."

The Jewish people is, in its fidelity to what is to us the "Old" Testament --- that is the Mosaic disposition of the unique promise made to our Father Abraham, a promise which the Epistle to Galatians calls "the Alliance" --- the witness of the "magnalia Dei" upon which we are constructed; these "beginnings which have no end" as spoken about by Saint Gregory of Nyssa.

It has given testimony of it before the pagans and for our own comfort in faith, at the beginning of God's compassion, the final sense of which is to be found in Jesus Christ and which the document justly characterizes as "root, source, foundation and promise."

It is giving testimony to the unfulfillment of God's design which Saint Paul presents us as the mysterious secret, in chapters 9 and 11 of the Epistle to the Romans. But no more than the Episcopal document do we claim to understand everything and say everything. We wish as the document does that a new chapter be opened in the reflection of Christians in the difficult dialogue with the Jews and in our confident relation with the people of the Bible.

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Paris 16.4.1973

THE ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS TOWARDS JUDAISM
A DECLARATION OF THE EPISCOPAL COMMISSION
FOR RELATIONS WITH JUDAISM

I. The existence of the Jewish people challenges the Christian conscience

The very existence of the Jewish people, its often precarious state throughout its history, the tragic ordeals that it has undergone in the past and above all in recent times, and its partial regathering in the Land of the Bible signify more and more, for Christians, a reality which may bring them nearer to a better understanding of their own faith and illuminate their own lives.

The indestructibility of this people all down the ages, its survival over many other civilizations, its presence as a stern and exigent partner confronting Christianity are facts of the highest importance which we dare not treat with either indifference or disdain.

The Church, which attaches itself to the name of Jesus Christ and which, through him, finds itself, from its first origin, eternally linked with the Jewish people, perceives in the age-long, unbroken, being of Jewry a sign which it would fain comprehend with absolute truth.

II. How slowly the Christian conscience travels!

On 28 October 1965, the Second Vatican Council solemnly promulgated the declaration "*Nostra Aetate*", in which is a chapter on the Jewish people. We reaffirm the importance of this text, wherein it is recalled that the Church "is nourished from the root of the veritable olive-tree onto which have been grafted the branches of the wild olive-tree — the Gentiles." It is our duty, as the Episcopal Commission for Relations with Judaism, to show forth the real import of this declaration and to point out its applications.

The attitude taken up by the Council should be looked upon as a beginning rather than an end. It marks a turning-point in the Christian outlook on Judaism. It opens up a way and permits us to make an exact appraisal of our task.

The declaration is built upon a return to the scriptural sources. It breaks with the standpoint of an entire past. It calls for a new survey of the Jewish people by Christians from now on, not only in the domain of human relations but also in that of faith. Obviously, it is not possible in a single

day to re-examine all the pronouncements recorded in the Church over the centuries, or every historical posture portrayed. The Christian conscience has, nonetheless, started this process, which reminds the Church of its Jewish roots. The main thing is that it be begun, that it reach every stratum of the Christian people and that it be everywhere pursued with honesty and vigour.

III. The eternal mission of the Jewish people

It is not possible to regard the Jewish "religion" simply as one among the religions that presently exist on this earth. It is through the people of Israel that belief in the One God has been engraved in the chronicles of mankind. It is through the people of Israel that, albeit with certain differences, monotheism became the shared guerdon of the three great families which stem from the heritage of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam.

According to Bible revelation, it was God Himself Who made the Jewish people, schooled it and taught it His designs, sealing an eternal Covenant with it (Genesis, 17.7) and endowing it with a vocation that Saint Paul terms irrevocable (Romans 11,29). To it we owe the Pentateuch, the Prophets and the other sacred Books which finalize its message. Assembled by tradition, written and oral, these teachings were received by the Christians, without the Jews being in any wise thereby dispossessed of them.

Even if, for Christianity, the Covenant is renewed in Jesus Christ, Judaism must be regarded by Christians as a reality that is not merely social and historical, but primarily religious; not as the relic of a venerable, antiquated, past, but as a living reality for all time. The chief signs of this vitality of the Jewish people are the testimony of its collective loyalty to the One God; its fervour in studying the Scriptures to discover, in the light of Revelation, the meaning of human life; its search for identity in the midst of other peoples; and its constant effort to be gathered together again in a re-unified community. For us Christians, these signs put a question which goes to the very heart of our faith: What is the precise mission of the Jewish people in the Divine plan? What expectancy inspires it, and how does that expectancy differ from or resemble our own?

IV. Teach nought unconformable with the spirit of Christ ("*Nostra Aetate*", 4, paragraph 2)

a. It is urgent that Christians should once for all stop picturing the Jew to themselves in terms of platitudes that have been invented by an aggressive secularism; let us utterly expunge, and in all circumstances battle bravely against, caricatures unworthy of any decent person, and even more so of any decent Christian — for example, the travesty of the Jew who, with an innuendo of scorn or aversion, is said to be "not like the others", or of the

"usurious, ambitious, conspiratorial" Jew, or, more alarming yet in its consequences, of the Jew as a "deicide". These scandalous descriptions which, alas, are still current in our days whether in explicit fashion or obliquely, we denounce and condemn insistently. Anti-Semitism is a legacy from the pagan world, but it has been further reinforced in a Christian ambience by pseudo-theological arguments. The Jew is deserving of our attention and our esteem, often, our admiration, sometimes, surely, of friendly and fraternal criticism, but always of our love. Love is perhaps what he has lacked most, and it is in that respect that the Christian conscience has been most guilty.

b. It is a theological, historical and juridical error indiscriminately to hold the Jewish people responsible for the passion and death of Jesus Christ. The Catechism of the Council of Trent long ago rebuked that error (Pars 1, cap. 5, 11). If it is historically true that responsibility for the death of Jesus was shared in varying degree by certain Jewish and Roman authorities, the Church holds that "it is on account of the sin of all mankind that Christ, in his immense love, bowed himself to his passion and his death so that all might gain salvation" (*"Nostra Aetate"*, 6).

In spite of the contention in an ancient but questionable exegesis, one cannot infer from the New Testament that the Jewish people is shorn of its elect status. On the contrary, Scripture as a whole prompts us rather to discern in the solicitous allegiance of the Jewish people to its Law and its Covenant the sign of God's allegiance to His people.

c. It is a fallacy to set Judaism as a religion of fear against Christianity as a religion of love. The fundamental article of the Jewish faith, the Shema, begins with the words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God", and goes on to enjoin love of one's fellow-man (Leviticus 19, 18). This is the starting-point of the preaching of Jesus and is thus a doctrine common to Judaism and Christianity.

The sense of God's transcendence and allegiance, of His justice and mercy, of repentance and forgiveness of sins, are basic elements of Jewish tradition. Christians who lay claim to the same values would err in believing that Jewish spirituality, today no less, has nothing more to offer them.

d. In defiance of widely-held opinions, it must be asserted that the doctrine of the Pharisees is not the reverse of Christianity. The Pharisees sought to make the Law come alive for every Jew by so interpreting its precepts as to adapt them to the different circumstances of existence. Contemporary researches have yielded clear evidence that the Pharisees, as also the Sages of the Talmud, were by no means strangers to the inner meaning of the Law. It is not these manifestations that Jesus decries when he denounces the attitude of certain Pharisees or the formalism of their teaching. It appears, moreover, that it was because the Pharisees and the early Christians were close to one another in many ways that they fought so bitterly at times over the traditions handed down from the era of the Patriarchs and the interpretation of the Mosaic Law.

V. Reaching a just understanding of Judaism

Christians, if only for their own sakes, should acquire a true and living knowledge of Jewish tradition.

a. A genuinely Christian catechism must affirm the ongoing value of the Bible in its entirety. The first Covenant, indeed, has not been made obsolescent by the new, but is its root and source, its foundations and its promise. If it is true that, for us, the Old Testament does not disclose its ultimate meaning save in the light of the New Testament, this in itself presumes that it shall be welcomed and recognized, first, in its own right (*cf.* 2 Tim. 3, 16). One must not forget that, by his obedience to the Torah and by his prayer, Jesus, a Jew by virtue of his mother the Virgin Mary, accomplished his ministry in the midst of the people of the Covenant.

b. The effort must be exerted to present the special vocation of this people as being "the Sanctification of the Name". Here is one of the essential dimensions of synagogal prayer, whereby the Jewish people, invested with a priestly mission (Exodus 19, 6), offers the totality of Man's acts to God and glorifies Him. This vocation makes of the life and prayer of the Jewish people a benison for all the nations on earth.

c. To regard the precepts of Judaism as no more than practices of constraint is to underestimate them. Its rituals are acts to break the day-to-day pattern of existence and remind those who observe them of the lordship of God. Pious Jews greet as God's gifts the Sabbath day and the rites whereof the purpose is to sanctify the works of men. Above and beyond their literal significance, they are light and joy for the Jew along the path of life (Psalms 119). They are a form of "building Time itself" and of giving thanks for all of creation. And, indeed, all existence must be ascribed to God, as Paul reminded his brothers (I Cor. 10, 30-31).

d. The dispersion of the Jewish people is to be understood in the light of its recorded history.

If Jewish tradition regards the trials and exile of the people as a punishment for its disloyalties (Jeremiah 13, 17; 20, 21-23), it is nevertheless still the case that, since the time of Jeremiah's letter to the exiles of Babylon (*ibid.*, 29, 1-23), the life of the Jewish people in the Diaspora has also had a positive quality: through its trials, the Jewish people is called upon to "sanctify the Divine Name" among the nations.

Christians must forever combat the anti-Jewish, Manichaeian, temptation to look upon the Jewish people as accursed on the pretext that it has been a victim of unending persecution. Rather, according to Scripture's own testimony (Isaiah, 53, 2-4), to undergo suffering is often the effect and reminder of the prophetic state.

e. It is more difficult than ever today to pass a calm theological judgment on the movement of return of the Jewish people to "its" Land. That being so, first and foremost we cannot, as Christians, overlook the gift vouchsafed

long ago by God to the people of Israel of a Land wherein it was summoned to dwell again (cf. Genesis 12, 7; 26, 3-4; 28, 13; Isaiah 43, 5-7; Jeremiah 16, 15; Zephaniah 3, 20).

Ever in history, Jewish existence has been constantly divided between life in dispersion among the nations and dedication to nationhood in its own Land. It is a striving that creates many problems for the Jewish conscience itself. To understand the striving and the controversy which it provokes in all its dimensions, Christians must not allow themselves to be led away by interpretations that misconceive the communal and religious ways of life of Judaism, or by well-meant but hurriedly-adopted political standpoints. They should take account of the interpretation which the Jews themselves set upon their regathering about Jerusalem — in the name of their faith, they consider it as a blessing.

This return, and its repercussions, put justice to the test. On the political level, there is a confrontation between different requirements of justice. Beyond the legitimate diversity of political options, the universal conscience cannot deny the Jewish people, which has undergone so many vicissitudes in the course of its annals, the right, and the means, to its own political being among the nations. That right, and these possibilities of existence, can no longer be withheld by the nations from those who, by reason of local conflicts resulting from their return, are presently the victims of serious situations of injustice. So let us turn attentive eyes to this Land visited by God, and cherish the eager hope that it become a place where all its inhabitants, Jews and Gentiles, may live in peace. It is a cardinal question that faces Christian and Jew alike, to know whether the regathering of the scattered congregations of the Jewish people, end-product of the interplay of persecution and political forces, will, in the end, prove, or fail to prove, to be one of the paths of Divine justice for the Jewish people, and, at the same time, for all the peoples on earth. How can Christians remain uninterested in what is being decided in that Land today?

VI. Promote mutual understanding and respect ("*Nostra Aetate*", 4, paragraph 2)

In most cases, encounters between Jews and Christians are still marked today by mutual ignorance and, at times, a certain mistrust. This ignorance and this mistrust have been in the past and can still in the future be the source of grave misunderstanding and disturbing ills. We consider it essential and urgent that priests, faithful Christians and all who are responsible for education, on whatever level they stand, should strive to inculcate in Christians a better understanding of Judaism, of its traditions, its customs and its chronicles.

The first condition is for all Christians to respect the Jew at all times, whatever his way of being a Jew. They should seek to understand him as he understands himself, instead of judging him according to their own modes of thought. Let them respect his convictions, his aspirations, his rites and the attachment which he vows to them. Let them also understand that there can be different ways of being a Jew and of recognizing oneself as Jewish, without

detriment to the fundamental unity of Jewish existence.

The second condition is that, in meetings between Christians and Jews, each should recognize the other's right fully to proclaim his faith without suspicion of wishing thereby to suborn a person disloyally away from his own community and join his own. Such intent must be eschewed, not only because of respect for the other party which every dialogue with any person, whoever he may be, demands, but even more for a special reason which Christian laymen and above all clergy will do well to bear in mind. It is that the Jewish people, as a nation, was the object of an "Eternal Covenant" without which the "New Covenant" itself would have no being. Therefore, far from envisaging the disappearance of the Jewish community, the Church realizes itself as in quest of a living link with it. A great opening of the spirit, distrust of their own prejudices and an acute sense of the psychological conditioning of the individual, are, when such problems have to be faced, indispensable assets in the pastors of the Church. Even if, in the present-day context of "a frontierless civilization", there are personal actions that fall outside the governance of either community, the respect which the two communities have for each other in reciprocity should not on that account be affected.

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VII. The Church and the Jewish people

a. The Jewish people, by virtue of its special vocation, is conscious of having been given a universal mission to the nations. The Church, for its part, deems that its own mission cannot but be inscribed in that same universal plan of salvation.

b. Israel and the Church are not complementary institutions. Permanence, as between Israel and the Church, is the sign of the incompleteness of God's design. The Jewish people and the Christian people are thus in a situation of reciprocal questioning, or, as Paul says, of "jealousy" on the issue of unity (Romans 11, 14; cf. Deut. 32, 21).

c. The words of Jesus himself and the teaching of Paul testify to the role of the Jewish people in the accomplishment of the final unity of mankind, as a union of Israel and the nations. Thus the quest for its unity which Judaism pursues today cannot be alien to God's plan of salvation. Nor can it be without kinship to the efforts of Christians in search of their own unity, even if the two movements are realizing themselves along very different paths.

But if the Jews and Christians do accomplish their vocations by following distinct courses, history shows that their ways intersect again and again. Is not their common concern one for messianic times? It is, therefore, to be desired that they will at long last enter upon the path of mutual recognition and understanding, and that, casting aside their ancient enmity, they will turn to their Father in one and the same movement of hope, which will bespeak a promise for the entire globe.

Appendix

We append translations of excerpts from *Le Monde* of 19 April and 25 April, as illustrative of Arab reactions to the Declaration of the Episcopal Commission for Relations with Judaism.

Le Monde, 19.4.73

Libyan Ambassador to Holy See: A regrettable declaration

The Libyan ambassador to the Holy See has made the following declaration:

"Concerning relations between the Jewish nation and its Land, it is evident that the people concerned are generous with what does not belong to them. The Palestinian Land belongs to the Palestinian people and not to the French Bishops. It is to be deplored that the spokesmen for the Church of France, which has always found all doors open to it in Libya, for apostolic as well as for educational purposes, and the Church's religious, as well as cultural establishments should have forgotten that Libya is actually under constant threat and suffers constant violations of its territory by the Israelis. These violations each time provoke destruction and loss of scores and hundreds of human lives."

Le Monde, 25.4.73

Arab ambassadors in Paris: "A blasphemous text"

At a meeting that took place at Arab League headquarters on 20 April, the Arab ambassadors in Paris issued the following declaration:

"Uninvolved, as they are, in the religious debate that has been opened by the Episcopal Commission on Relations with Judaism, the Arab ambassadors in Paris would have refrained from taking part and would have left the entire responsibility for their positions to the French Bishops as regards the conformity of those positions, on the one hand, with the teaching of the French Church on the other, and with the firmly abiding and unshakeable wish of His Holiness Pius VI that Jerusalem be internationalized. But the easily foreseeable political consequences of the, to say the least, confusing directives of the Episcopal Commission oblige them to express their strong feeling."

The ambassadors also

"take note with great astonishment of the fact that the French Episcopate lays it down as an imperative duty for Christians to recognize Israel's political right to existence, while the French Episcopate must be aware that such right has, for the last twenty-five years, been specifically interpreted as a negation of the very same right to the Palestinian people, of legitimate sovereignty in the Palestinian land."

The ambassadors' communiqué adds that,

"by making the spiritual and the temporal into an amalgam that is fraught with consequences, the text of the Episcopal Commission is not only inopportune and partial, it is blasphemous in that it claims that the Zionist State is an accomplishment of God's will and *ipso facto* condemns the Palestinian people, the sons of Ishmael, and, moreover, the people solely and veritably destined to fulfill the biblical prophecy, to suffer the injustice of a new Diaspora and statelessness."

