



THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE  
AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 33, Folder 7, John Paul I [Pope], 1978.

**Marc H. Tannenbaum**

# Pope John Paul I, The Jews, and Israel

*(Rabbi Tannenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, is a leader in Jewish-Christian relations and was recently voted among the "ten most respected and influential religious leaders in America" in a poll of newspaper writers.)*

## A Background Memorandum

Religion is more caught than taught, the Anglican divine Dean Inge once wrote. If there is truth to that maxim—as I believe there is—Pope John Paul I seems to have "caught" favorable attitudes toward the Jewish people and Judaism from his mother, and that may prove to be more promising for the future of Catholic-Jewish relations under his Papacy than anything that he might have been taught.

As the media have abundantly documented, Pope John Paul was born and raised in a desperately poor family in the northern Italian village of Canale d'Agordo. To eke out a living for his family, his father became a migrant bricklayer in Switzerland, and then returned to an island north of Venice where he worked as a glass artisan. To help sustain her family, Albina Luciani's mother worked as a maid in the household of a Jewish family.

In March 1977, at a meeting of the joint Vatican - International Jewish Committee concerned with Catholic-Jewish relations, Cardinal Luciani saw fit to recall his mother's experience as deeply formative of his own personal attitudes toward Jews. The affable Cardinal warmly recalled that the Jewish family was very kind to Mrs. Luciani, and their faith in Judaism greatly impressed her. The Cardinal said that his mother passed her respect for that Jewish family and their religion on to him, and he added, he traces his warm feelings toward Judaism to that childhood experience.

Bishop Francis Mugavero, of Brooklyn, N.Y., who attended the March 1977 meeting recently said that the group could feel that Cardinal Luciani had warm and respectful feelings toward Jews and Judaism and "he meant it." He was also "very much 'with it' in terms of understanding the cause of promoting respect between Catholics and Jews."

During World War II, Don Albino Luciani, then a young seminarian and a teacher in Belluno, visited prisoners in Nazi jails and was "an indefatigable pastor" supporting morally partisans in the anti-Nazi resistance. Don Albino's anti-fascism was consonant with Dr. Lucy Dawidowicz' description of the attitudes of the Italian people toward Jews under the Nazi regime. She writes in her classic study, *The War Against the Jews: 1939-1945*, on page 358:

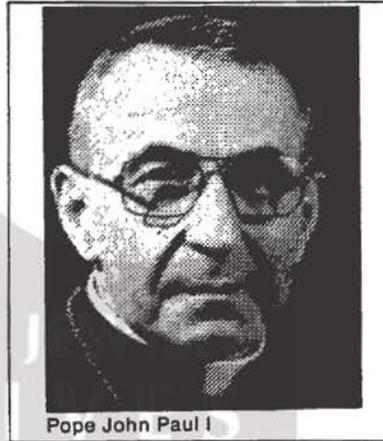
"In Italy, the Catholic hierarchy behaved like the Italians...The overwhelming cooperation that the Italians gave their Jewish compatriots (was)...the consequence of the repudiation of anti-Semitism and the commitment of unconditional equality."

An old Jewish community, Dr. Dawidowicz adds, the Italian Jews since the Emancipation had been fully accepted socially and economically into Italian society. Anti-Semitism was not a serious threat to Italian Jews, even during the early years of the Fascist regime when some 57,000 Jews lived in Italy, about 10,000 of whom were refugees from Germany and Austria. Dr. Dawidowicz asserts that the Italians remained unresponsive to German demands to deport Jews. (The 8,000 Jews in Italy who were annihilated were mainly destroyed by the Nazis.)

Given the philosemitic nurture he received from his mother and his own personal encounter with Nazi bestiality, it is not surprising that in 1975, as Cardinal Luciani, the new Pope John Paul took part in an interreligious observance in Venice commemorating the six million Jewish victims of Nazi genocide and millions of other human beings destroyed by the Nazis. According to the *London Jewish Chronicle*, Cardinal Luciani then condemned anti-Semitism, expressed his horror over the Nazi massacres, and pledged to lend his efforts to uproot the sources of anti-Jewish hatred in Christian culture.

That deeply human and empathic appreciation of both the grandeur and the tragedy of Jewish life apparently carried over to Cardinal Luciani's spontaneous understanding of the importance of Israel to the Jewish people. In an interview that he gave to *Maariv*, the influential Israeli newspaper, on December 8, 1972, Cardinal Luciani declared:

"I certainly view favorably the return of



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the Jews to Palestine, and believe that, after being dispersed for all these years, they are at last entitled to a state of their own."

While noting that there were those in the Catholic Church who believed that the modern-day Jewish state contradicted one of Christianity's historic dogmas which viewed the wretched state of the Jews among nations as a punishment for not accepting Jesus as Messiah, the Cardinal told *Maariv*:

"I, however, do not view the return of the Jewish people to its land today as a contradiction of any religious principle of Christianity. It does, perhaps, contradict... traditional beliefs prevalent in the Christian world over the centuries; but that can be overcome." And, as if for emphasis, he added, "For my part, I have no doubt that there is a link between the Jews and Palestine."

Turning to the issue of Jerusalem, Cardinal Luciani stated that (Christian) "pilgrims returning from Jerusalem said they were very satisfied...The Church does not wish to control Jerusalem, only to worship in the holy places."

His views then seem to anticipate the present policy of the Holy See which has recently abandoned the traditional position of calling for the internationalization of the city of Jerusalem, advocating instead an international statute that would give extra-territorial status to all holy places.

The practical implications of Pope John Paul's direct and open feelings toward Jews and Israel were perhaps most clearly re-

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Such a "just solution" could come about, the Pope said, only if the problems of "the Palestinians, the security of Israel, and the holy city of Jerusalem" were solved. This conflict, he added, "which has been fought for more than 30 years in the land of Jesus has already caused so many victims and so much suffering, both among Arabs and Israeli."

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9/12/78



# The Pope, the Jews and Israel

By Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum

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## Supported anti-Nazi resistance

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Continued

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AS WE GO TO PRESS, WE LEARNED WITH SORROW OF THE ULTIMELY DEATH OF THE NEW POPE. HIS PASSING WILL BE MOURNED BY CHRISTIAN AND JEW ALIKE.

Jewish Journal of San Antonio

# Pope John Paul's Tie to Jews Traced to His Mother

(Editor's note: This article was written before the sudden death of Pope John Paul I last week.)

By RABBI MARCH TANENBAUM

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## Conviction Upheld

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The conviction of Dr. William R. Perl, the founder of the Jewish Defense League branch in the Washington area, for illegal receipt of a rifle and attempt to damage property used by two Soviet officials was upheld last week by the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond, Va.

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## Pope John Paul I

# Sympathetic To Jews & Israel

By RABBI MARCH.  
TANENBAUM

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### Shocking News!

The sudden death of Pope John Paul I occurred as the Voice was going to press. The staff has decided to publish the article, both as a memorial and quasi-biography of a religious man who, from all indications, would have been a leader filled with compassion, humaneness and humility.

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### Open Feelings

The practical implications of

(Continued on Page 36)

## POPE JOHN PAUL SAID TO RESPECT JEWISH PEOPLE

New York (JTA) — An American who was the only rabbi present at Vatican II, presided over by the last two Popes, said Sunday that their successor, Pope John Paul I, "will be good for the Jews."

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, explained his remark by saying that the former Cardinal Albino Luciani "possesses the warm touch of Pope John XXIII and the practical wisdom of Pope Paul VI." The 65-year-old Luciani, who was Patriarch of Venice until his surprise election Saturday by his fellow Cardinals as the 263rd



Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, selected a name that was apparently intended to signify he intended to continue the work of his two predecessors.

"In recent years as Cardinal of Venice, Pope John Paul made several statements in which he expressed his great respect for the Jewish people and the Jewish religion," Tanenbaum said. "It remains to be seen as to how he will translate his positive attitudes toward the Jewish community into policies toward Israel and, in particular, toward Jerusalem."

Tanenbaum noted that the AJ-Committee looks forward to "an early opportunity for establishing a dialogue on all questions and particularly to promoting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors."

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## News

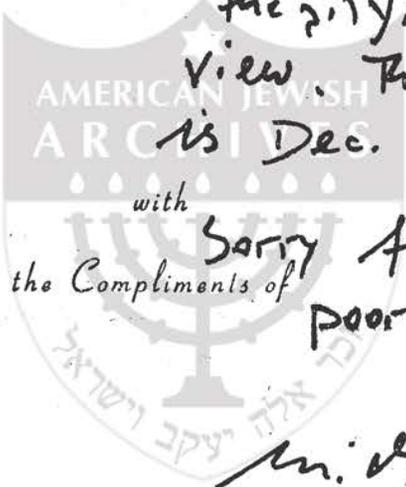
Meanwhile, it was announced in Jerusalem that the director general of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Israeli Ambassador to Italy will be part of the Israeli delegation attending the coronation ceremony of the new Pope on Sunday. Israeli government officials said the delegation will be larger than previously because of the improved relations with the Vatican. Catholic officials in Jerusalem said they expected the new Pope to attempt to broaden the Jewish-Catholic dialogue.

Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren said he hopes Pope John Paul will recognize the State of Israel and put an end to the slaughter in Lebanon. "I hope the first step of the new Pope will be to deal justly with the Jewish nation by recognizing the State of Israel," Goren added.

The Pontiff, in an appearance before a crowd of 150,000 at St. Peter's Square, stated he was thinking of strife-torn Lebanon. Pope John Paul, who has never been out of Italy, is expected to be a pastoral Pope rather than concentrate on ideological matters as did his two predecessors. He was born in the village of Forno di Canale, in northeast Italy, where his father, a Socialist, was for years a migrant worker before he got a job as a glassblower in Venice.

He worked as a parish priest and then as a teacher on the local level and in a seminary. Pope John made him a Bishop and Pope Paul named him Patriarch of Venice in 1969. In Venice, he allowed the churches to sell their jewels and precious stones to help the poor. He refused to wear the customary precious ring that went with his office. But he also recommended disciplining priests who spoke out in favor of the Communist Party or other leftist groups.

Dr. Marc Tannenbaum



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view. The date  
is Dec. 8, 1972

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Aug. 31/78

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HIS HOLINESS  
POPE JOHN PAUL I  
VATICAN CITY, ITALY

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE EXTENDS TO YOUR HOLINESS THE  
CORDIAL AND FRATERNAL GREETINGS ON YOUR ~~PROVIDENTIAL~~ ELECTION

AS SUPREME PONTIFF OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. HAVING BEEN PRIVILEGED  
in promoting friendship and understanding between Catholics and Jews  
TO BE ASSOCIATED IN FRUITFUL COLLABORATION/~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

~~XXX~~ WITH YOUR PREDECESSORS POPE JOHN XXIII AND POPE PAUL VI OF  
BLESSED MEMORY DURING AND SINCE VATICAN COUNCIL II, WE LOOK  
FORWARD TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE/~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ WITH  
YOUR HOLINESS AND VATICAN AUTHORITIES IN THE MONTHS AHEAD.

THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE  
JOIN IN PRAYING FOR GOD'S RICHEST BLESSINGS OVER YOU AND  
THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS FOR THE WELFARE OF MILLIONS OF CATHOLICS  
AND JEWS AS WELL AS FOR ALL MEMBERS OF GOD'S HUMAN FAMILY.

RESPECTFULLY,

RICHARD MAAS, PRESIDENT

MILES JAFFE, NATIONAL CHAARMAN OF  
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

BERTRAM H. GOLD, EXECUTIVE VICE-PRESIDENT

RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL  
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTOR

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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Aug. 24  
Ohio Jewish  
Chronicle

ROSCHE, LEGAL ADVISOR TO THE (CONTINUED ON PAGE 1)

# New Pope Expected To Have Good Relations With Jews

By David Friedman

NEW YORK (JTA) An American, who was the only rabbi to be present at Vatican II presided over by the last two Popes, said today that their successor, Pope John Paul I, "will be good for the Jews."

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, national inter-religious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, explained his remark by saying that the former Cardinal Albino Luciani "possesses the warm touch of Pope John XXIII and the practical

wisdom of Pope Paul VI." The 65-year-old Luciani, who was Patriarch of Venice until his surprise election yesterday by his fellow Cardinals as the 263rd Supreme Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church, selected a name that was apparently intended to signify he intended to continue the work of his two predecessors.

"In recent years as Cardinal of Venice, Pope John Paul made several statements in which he expressed his great respect for the Jewish people and the Jewish religion," Tanenbaum said. "It remains to be seen as to how he will translate his positive attitudes toward the Jewish community into policies toward Israel and, in particular, toward Jerusalem."

Tanenbaum noted that the AJCommittee looks forward to "an early opportunity for establishing a dialogue on all questions and particularly to promoting peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors."

AJCommittee president Richard Maass issued a statement today in which his organization extended "its cordial and fraternal greetings" to the new Pope. "In a world that is threatened by potential nuclear destruction and hazunted by vast human needs of the poor and deprived, we pledge to cooperate with Pope John Paul, not only in promoting improved understanding between Catholics and Jews, but as well in advancing the cause of world peace, human rights and social justice," Maass said.

### Israeli Delegation At Coronation

Meanwhile, it was announced in Jerusalem today

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

## Recognized Annual Mtg.

Raymond and Pauline Kahn as chairman of the Jewish Center Expo, and Joyce Zacks, as chairman of the "Partners in Freedom" reception.

Finally, Dennis Mellman will be honored as the 1978 recipient of the Therese Stern Kahn Young Leadership Award. Fred Yenkin, chairman of the Selection Committee, will confer the award upon Mr. Mellman.

The invocation at the dinner will be delivered by Rabbi Sheldon Switkin of Tifereth Israel. Rabbi Switkin also serves as chairman of the Columbus Board of Rabbis. The closing benediction will be given by Rabbi Harvey Goldman, spiritual leader of Temple Israel.

Invitations have been mailed and all members of the community are requested to return their R.S.V.P. cards at their earliest possible convenience. Reservations may also be made by calling the Federation office, 237-7686.

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HIS HOLINESS POPE JOHN PAUL I  
VATICAN CITY, ITALY

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE EXTENDS TO YOUR HOLINESS CORDIAL AND FRATERNAL GREETINGS ON YOUR ELECTION AS SUPREME PONTIFF OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. HAVING BEEN PRIVILEGED TO BE ASSOCIATED IN FRUITFUL COLLABORATION IN PROMOTING FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND JEWS WITH YOUR PREDECESSORS POPE JOHN XXIII AND POPE PAUL VI OF BLESSED MEMORY DURING AND SINCE VATICAN COUNCIL II, WE LOOK FORWARD TO OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE COOPERATION WITH YOUR HOLINESS AND VATICAN AUTHORITIES IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. THE OFFICERS AND MEMBERS OF

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PAGE TWO

OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE JOIN IN PRAYING FOR GOD'S RICHEST BLESSINGS OVER YOU AND THE WORK OF YOUR HANDS FOR THE WELFARE OF MILLIONS OF CATHOLICS AND JEWS AS WELL AS FOR ALL MEMBERS OF GOD'S HUMAN FAMILY. RESPECTFULLY.

RICHARD MAASS, PRESIDENT  
RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL  
INTERRELIGIOUS AFFAIRS DIRECTOR  
AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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The Most Reverend Jean Jadot, Apostolic Delegate  
has the honor to request your presence  
at a  
Mass of Thanksgiving  
on the occasion of the election of  
His Holiness, Pope John Paul I  
to be celebrated at the  
National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception  
on Saturday, the Ninth of September  
at five-fifteen, in the afternoon

Please present this invitation at the main door of the Church

SEP 20 1978

September 14, 1978.

Memorandum

To: Marc Tanenbaum; Bertram Gold  
From: Zachariah Shuster  
Subject: Pope John-Paul I and Current Inter-Religious  
Affairs.

1. The general reaction of public opinion in Europe during the first period following the election of John-Paul I as head of the Catholic Church was very favorable. He is being considered as a man of great integrity, fidelity to traditional beliefs and at the same time open to eucumenical tendencies that have developed within the Church since the ascension of John XXIII. The impression is that he is a man of great humility, deep sincerity, and that he desires to lead the Church along the path outlined by his predecessors, although he had no occasion to deal with acute problems up to the time of his election as Pontiff.

In Vatican circles there is a mood of "wait and see" and none of the authorities there is eager to commit himself as to the future direction of the new regime. It is assumed, however, that the reappointment of the present hierarchy does not signify that there will be no change in the Vatican administration. This reappointment is being considered as a tactical step in order not to disturb matters, but it is not excluded that within a foreseeable time there will be a rearrangement of the Vatican hierarchy.

From the point of view of our immediate concerns the most significant action taken by the new Pope was his statement delivered in his first public address on September 7th at St. Peter's Basilica about the Middle East. In this statement he advanced as a desirable objective the settlement of the Israeli-Arab conflict and the assurance of "the security of Israel." Such an objective was never pronounced by any of his predecessors nor by any other Vatican personality.

Because of <sup>the</sup> ~~its~~ importance of this statement I am translating here the full text of it. He said:

" You know that today at Camp David there is taking place a conference for the purpose of finding a solution to the conflict in the Middle East, a conflict which has caused so many victims and so much suffering both among the Arabs and among the Israelis, a conflict which is raging like an old disease. Think for example of Lebanon, Lebanon the martyr, shaken by the repercussions of this crisis. I wish <sup>us</sup> to pray together for the success of the meeting at Camp David so that the discussions there should be climaxed by a just and complete peace: just in the sense of satisfying all parties

involved in the conflict and complete in the sense that no questions should remain unresolved - the Palestinian problem, the security of Israel, the city of Jerusalem. Let us pray to the Lord that he illuminate the responsibilities of all the interested peoples so that they should be courageous in order to take the decisions which will bring serenity and peace to the Holy Land and to the entire Eastern world."

Catholic circles in Europe have taken note of the Pope's demand for the "security of Israel" which, as indicated above, is the first expression of its kind by a Pope ever.

La Croix, the prominent French Catholic daily, observes that this is the first pronouncement by a Pope of such a point and further notes that "under the pontificate of Paul VI the diplomacy of the Holy See has shown on several occasions its sensitivity to the Palestinian problem but always displayed great reserve with regard to the Israeli realities. Do the words pronounced by John - Paul I presage an evolution of the relationship between the Vatican and Israel, an evolution marked by more flexibility and realism? It is too soon to say anything definite about it."

This cautious observation by La Croix poses a most important question and one must follow carefully the further steps of the Vatican on this issue in order to determine if there is a change in Vatican policy towards Israel on the basic issues. It is also most interesting that the Pope dealt again with the Middle Eastern problem only two days after his first public audience. He discussed the subject at his weekly Sunday address to the public in St. Peter's Square on September 11. In this address he expressed his hope for peace in the Middle East because "all men are hungry and thirsty for peace, especially the poor who suffer most from torture and war." He then said:

"The brothers in religion of President Sadat have the habit of saying: on a dark night, in a dark storm, there is a small insect and God sees it, God does not forget. President Carter, who is a fervent Christian ~~man~~, has read in the New Testament: "knock and it will be opened, askeand it will be given; not a hair on your head will fall without the permission of your father." And Prime Minister Begin has turned towards the Lord lamenting: "You have forgotten us, you have abandoned us." "No," responded ~~God~~ through the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, "even if a mother forgets her child, I shall never abandon you, never, my people."

There is no doubt that the new Pope is imbued with

the genuine desire to accomplish the objectives set forth by his two predecessors and that the euumenical spirit will continue to prevail, although it will probably take some time before the instrumentalities will be definitely arranged.

2. The Latin American Episcopal Conference which is to take place in Pueblo, Mexico, in October is considered here to be of significance not only for Latin America but for the entire social and eucumenical trend within the Church. This global significance is due to the fact that the conference will probably take a stand on major social issues facing Latin American countries and ipso facto other third world regions.

I am informed that the Latin American section of the World Jewish Congress has been invited to send an observer to this conference. Also Father Jorge Mejia, Secretary of the Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism of the Vatican, will attend in his capacity.

3. I understand that a meeting with the World Council of Churches which was scheduled for November 1st in Geneva is not yet definite for the reason that some of the documentary material that was supposed to be discussed at this meeting has not been prepared yet. The matter will have to be decided at the IJCIC on September 21st.

4. I have recently been in contact with several academic and religious bodies with regard to the revision of religious textbooks in Germany and I am assured that intensive work is going on in the preparation of long-range projects. I am planning a visit to Germany soon and shall report in due time.

cc: FAD