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Preserving American Jewish History

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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 34, Folder 15, John Paul II [Pope] - Yasser Arafat, 1982.

ההסתדרות הציונית של ארצות הברית



Zionist Organization of America

JACOB and LIBBY GOODMAN ZOA HOUSE • 4 EAST 34th STREET • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 • (212) 481-1500
CABLES: ZIONISTS, NEW YORK

In Israel:
ZOA HOUSE
1 DANIEL FRISCH ST., TEL AVIV
CABLES: ZOAHOUSE, TEL AVIV

September 16, 1982

Dear Friend,

Enclosed you will find the text of a cablegram sent to Pope John Paul II from Ivan J. Novick in regard to the Pope's greeting of terrorist chief Yasir Arafat.

To reiterate the efforts that should be taken by ZOA on this issue, please note the following points:

1. A cablegram should be sent from each Region and District decrying the meeting between the Pope and Arafat. In addition to the points made in the enclosed statement, the following points are also suitable for the communication or discussion of the issue.
 - a. ...any meeting of the Pope with the murderer of Jewish children would be seen by Jews around the world as an obscenity, for such a meeting would confer legitimacy on the strategy of terror and the vow to destroy Israel for which Yasir Arafat and the PLO stand.
 - b. ...the Pope has spoken eloquently of the necessity of peace in the Middle East and around the world. Arafat is the self-proclaimed enemy of peace. His Palestinian National Covenant calls for the destruction of Israel. Arafat himself has stated, "peace for us means Israel's destruction and nothing else."
 - c. ...Arafat's terrorists also slaughtered tens of thousands of Christians during the PLO's occupation of Lebanon. The acceptance of Arafat in anyway is immoral under these circumstances.
 - d. ...it is unthinkable that a decade after the murder of Israel's Olympic athletes in Munich, Yasir Arafat -- his legions scattered, his arms captured, his prestige demolished -- should achieve his greatest victory by having been received by Pope John Paul II.
2. To ensure greater distribution of the enclosed cable, or one that has already been sent from your locale, the following suggestions should be reviewed and/or taken into consideration for further action.
 - a. Copies of the cable to the Pope should be called in to Catholic and local press, either to the Religion Editor or the correspondent handling Jewish and local reaction to the Vatican meeting.
 - b. One copy of the cable should be delivered to the local Archdiocese and/or the Catholic leadership in your area.
 - c. One copy of the cable should go to the: National Council of Bishops, 1312 Mass. Ave., N.W. Washington, D. C. 20005
 - d. A copy of your communications on behalf of ZOA on this issue should be sent to the Public Affairs Department of ZOA National for further distribution and record.

Thank you for all your help and perseverance at this incredulous time. Through all of this, allow me to wish you and yours a peaceful and happy Rosh Hashonah, with much mazel in the year to come.

Sincerely,

David Black, Director
Middle East Issues and Information

Anti-Defamation League

ADL of B'nai B'rith

823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017 212-490-2525 Telex 649278

LYNNE IANNIELLO
Director, Communications

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, Sept. 15....Kenneth J. Bialkin, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, today issued the following statement on the meeting today between Pope John Paul II and Yasir Arafat:

"We are deeply saddened and offended that the Pope ignored the appeals of those who asked him not to reward terrorism by granting an audience to Yasir Arafat."

AJ, CP, IP, JSP, MPR, BHFOR, BHM, BHN, BHR-82

TO: Donald Feldstein

Confidential

FROM: Marc Tanenbaum

DATE: Sept. 13, 82; 4:15 p.m.

RE: Conversation with Apostolic Delegate to U.S.

The Pope 's representative to the U.S., Apostolic Delegate Pio

Laghi, just telephoned me from Washington. He started out by saying, "I know you are distressed and I understand your reasons for being concerned."

He then said that ~~that~~ he had visits during the past two days from the Israeli Ambassador and the State Dept. with whom he has reviewed the entire situation.

Laghi then made several points of interest:

1) Should this audience take place, it will not be a private audience. On Wednesdays, the Pope holds public audiences for hundreds of visitors, and Arafat may be among them. If he does join this group, it is expected that Arafat will then seek a few minutes with the Pope. It may be granted, but not in the Pope's chambers nor his library.

2) Laghi said that if the meeting does take place, he asked for in a conversation with the Vatican Secretariat of State today and expects that "a strong statement" will be issued by the Holy See clarifying its position - condemning violence and terrorism, demanding the PLO accept UN 242 recognizing Israel's sovereignty, and supporting the Palestinian cause for autonomy and self-governance.

He will let me know if anything further develops.

TO: AJC Area Directors

FROM: Marc Tenenbaum

SEND OUT TODAY, IF POSSIBLE

DATE: September 13, 1982

RE: AJC REACTION TO POPE'S PROPOSED AUDIENCE WITH ARAFAT

Attached is a copy of a cablegram setting forth AJC's response to the proposed audience of PLO's Yasir Arafat with Pope John Paul II in Vatican City. This text was presented by Robert S. Jacobs, Interreligious Affairs Commission Chairman, to the AJC's Board of Governors today, and it was adopted unanimously.

Several board members suggested that this text be sent to each of the local Cardinals and Bishops in your local community, to other Catholic contacts, ~~xxxxxx~~ as well as to the Catholic press and the general press. ~~It is extremely important to establish a precedent for the press to report on the PLO's actions. The precedent that is being set by this "baptizing" of the PLO is morally unacceptable.~~

You may also wish to share this text with friendly Protestants and Evangelicals and, where possible, invited them to issue their own independent statements of concern.

Please share with us any clippings or other ~~rep~~ statements that emerge from this action. Many thanks - and a Shenah Tovah!

The Pope and Arafat

Pope John Paul II's decision to meet Yasir Arafat, at the latter's request, when the PLO leader visited Rome for an international conference this week, stirred up a hornet's nest of protests from Israeli and other Jewish spokespersons. The reaction, we believe, though understandable by reason of vehement feelings most Jews bear toward the PLO, is objectively an excess.

The present Pope and his predecessors have often met with national leaders whose policies and actions the pontiffs repudiate in whole or in part. Among such leaders we might recall Nikolai Podgorny, Nicolae Ceausescu, Andrei Gromyko, Josef Tito, Edward Gierek and Todor Zhivkov — all Communist leaders of Eastern Europe, all leaders who have brutally oppressed and persecuted believers, including Jews and Catholics, in their countries.

No one would or should construe a pope's meeting with Soviet, Rumanian, Polish, Bulgarian, Yugoslav or other Communist leaders as a sign of the Pope's support or "recognition" for oppressive policies or evil actions they have perpetrated. So we should draw the same conclusion in respect to Yasir Arafat.

Pope John Paul — no novice in dealing with unscrupulous political leaders — has vigorously and repeatedly condemned terrorism from whatsoever source it comes. Only last February, the pontiff told an international conference in Rome that every terrorist act must be "unanimously unmasked, denounced, condemned and penalized" by the international community. "Terrorism," he said, "is a savage, inhuman method, to be absolutely banned." Any nation, the Pope continued, which encourages terrorism becomes an accomplice and "disqualifies itself from speaking to the world about justice."

The Holy Father would not grant Arafat's request for a meeting unless he judged that, as a result, he, the Pope, could make some contribution to a genuine peace settlement in the Middle East and could advance human rights and human dignity for all peoples. Arafat, moreover — an unwelcome but inescapable fact — has been designated by the Arab League as the representative of the Palestinian people in peace negotiations.

Thus we hope our Jewish friends both here and abroad will situate the Pope's meeting with Arafat in context. Regarding a statement from an anonymous government spokesman in Israel, we can say only that, false and hurtful as the statement was, it must be understood as formulated in the heat of emotion. It should be properly consigned, in Israel and elsewhere, to oblivion.

Community outraged by Pope-Arafat meeting

By STEWART AIN

There was shock and outrage in the Jewish community this week in the wake of the news that Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat was to be welcomed in the Vatican by Pope John Paul II, less than two weeks after the completion of the PLO's stunning military defeat at the hands of the Israeli Army.

"It's shameful," lamented Rabbi Morton Gordon, president of the Long Island Board of Rabbis, "How could someone who represents peace at its highest spiritual level meet with someone who represents terrorism at its basest level? Their meeting will only tell the world that murder and rape is acceptable behavior because it carries with it recognition and status."

Rep. John LeBoutillier (R-Westbury) said he could not accept the fact that the men would meet. But should it occur, he said, it would be "a disgrace."

"I don't think the Pope should meet with the man whose organization reportedly trained his would-be assassin," LeBoutillier said. "World leaders should not be bestowing on this defeated terrorist organization any legitimacy whatsoever. Just 10 years ago, his group killed the Israeli athletes in Munich and then took credit for it, bragging about what they did. It's just unbelievable."

Rep. Thomas Downey (D-Amityville) said that "on first impulse one would feel that providing Arafat with any legitimacy is unwarranted. But while Arafat remains a terrorist and the PLO a terrorist organization, if the Pope in his commitment to peace can win concessions from Arafat, can moderate Arafat, then I would support the meeting in the hope that it could bring us even a step closer to peace in the Middle East."

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, director of the Inter-Religious Affairs Department of the American Jewish Committee, said that just two days before last weekend's announcement of the Papal audience with Arafat he had returned from a meeting in Milan of the International Liaison Committee of Catholics and Jews and that "at no time during the discussions was such a meeting mentioned."

He noted that on March 18, 1981 Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Agostino Casaroli met with Farouk Kaddoumi, the head of the PLO's political department, and that Jewish leaders registered "the strongest possible protest over the moral indefensibility of the Holy See seeing a terrorist group. We indicated that it was incomprehensible to us that the Vatican should see a representative of a group that trained the Moslem fanatic in a PLO camp who almost succeeded in murdering the Pope."

"By providing that platform for the PLO, we are in fact contributing to the evil of terrorism and violence. The PLO will obtain an enhanced status without having to give up any of its doctrine of genocide (for the Jewish people)."

Tanenbaum noted that in "recent months the Pope has made statements condemning terrorism and violence in unqualified terms. He said it is a threat to the dignity of human life and called upon all groups and states to organize against terrorism. This action seems to be in flagrant contradiction of that moral position."

He said he fears that the PLO will use the Papal audience to distort what really occurs behind the closed doors of the Vatican just as it did in 1981 when Kaddoumi called a press conference "in the walls of the Vatican" following his meeting with Casaroli. During

that press conference, Kaddoumi proclaimed that the Vatican fully supported the PLO and its aims and actions, but Tanenbaum said he later learned that Kaddoumi had lied.

Tanenbaum said that he met with Vatican officials last October and that they told him that Kaddoumi was told the Vatican condemned the PLO and the massacre of Christians and Moslems then underway in Lebanon.

"We learned that Kaddoumi had, in a sense, hijacked the Vatican for his own purposes," Tanenbaum said. "And what we are seeing today is a major propaganda victory for the PLO."

Pope Could Meet With Arab Christians

Tanenbaum said that if the Pope had wished to express his concern for the plight of the Palestinian people, which was the ostensible purpose of the invitation, "he could just as easily met with Arab Christian leaders." He suggested that the meeting may have been forced upon the Pope by Western European nations with a heavy Catholic population.

He discounted the possibility that in such a meeting the Pope could "somehow, with sweet talk and with talking about love of one's enemies, convince them (PLO) to be models of civility. You have to know Satan when you see him and the Devil when he behaves like the Devil."

And the American Jewish Committee wired the Pope asking that he cancel his meeting at the last minute. In a message to Casaroli, Maynard I. Wishner, president of the organization, said it is "incomprehensible that (the) Holy Father who was nearly murdered by (a) terrorist fanatic trained by (the) PLO in Beirut, would reward terrorists by giving them implied sanctions through privilege of (an) audience in Vatican City."

Kenneth J. Bialkin, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, issued a similar call for the Pope to reconsider the meeting. He said that "for Arafat, the encounter with the Pope is a gift of recognition that murder, practiced often and indis-

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If the Pope meets Arafat, it will be an embrace between the prince of peace and the king of terror.

ately, is not without its reward."

As Berman, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, representing 36 major Jewish groups in the United States, enabled the Pope asking that he reconsider his decision to meet with Arafat.

"If you grant Arafat an interview, the world will interpret it in only one way: that you regard his views as worthy of discussion, his leadership of the Palestinian Arabs legitimate, his pretensions to statesmanship valid, his terrorist acts forgiven. Such a step, we strongly believe, would be a crushing blow to the cause of world peace to which you have devoted yourself."

Pope in Peacemaking Process

But Msgr. Daniel S. Hamilton, editor of the Long Beach Catholic, cautioned that it would be wrong to believe that merely because the Pope is meeting with Arafat that he necessarily subscribes to his views.

"The Jewish community should not in any way interpret this as any approval of the policies or actions of Yasser Arafat," Hamilton said. "It is simply an effort by the Pope in the peace-making process. He's met with many leaders with whom he is in complete disagreement, such as those in Communist East Europe."

He pointed out that one of the reasons the Pope may have chosen to meet with Arafat and not any other Palestinian leader is that the "PLO was designated by the Arab League as the spokesman for the Palestinian people."

Hamilton said also that he is certain "the Holy Father sees this meeting as possibly contributing in some way to peace in the Middle East. It is important to remember that the Pope has condemned all types of terrorism."

In his last address on the subject of terrorism last February 18, the Pope appealed for "solidarity among states so that every act of terrorism may be unanimously unmasked, denounced, condemned and penalized with sanctions, whatever pretext for it may be offered."

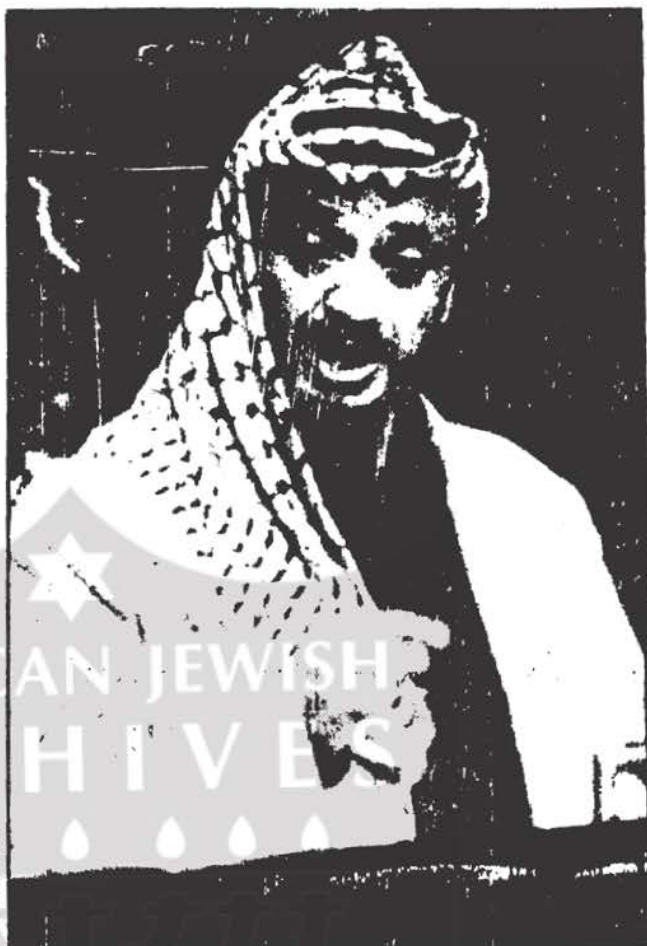
"Terrorism is a savage, unhuman message to be absolutely banned. A state that encourages such a message and makes itself the accomplice of its perpetrators disqualifies itself from speaking to the world about justice."

Dumbfounded by Papal Audience

It is those very words spoken by the Pope himself that confuses Msgr. George P. Graham, the Catholic representative on the Nassau/Suffolk Catholic-Jewish Relations Council, because he said he doesn't understand how the Pope could now meet with Arafat.

"He is not the head of a state, even though the Arab League treats him that way," Graham said. "After a defeat that eroded his military power, I expected that he would fade away, and yet he's being received with enthusiasm by the Arab League and in Greece. I believe this is a planned attempt to rehabilitate him, to establish the PLO as the voice of the Palestinian people."

Graham said that were it not for the PLO, the Arabs in



PLO chairman Yasser Arafat

the West Bank would have appointed their own true spokesperson. It was PLO terrorist activities that prevented such a move, he said.

Thus, Graham said he is dumbfounded by the Papal audience.

"I don't see them (PLO) as force for peace," he said. "And since Arafat has not been a force for peace, it is a surprise to me that a meeting of this sort is taking place. It implies that he can be a force for peace. The Vatican apparently feels it is part of the peacemaking efforts. But he does not strike me as a man who has a penchant for working for peace."

Graham noted that Arafat has "not repudiated the basic tenets of the PLO that call for Israel's destruction."

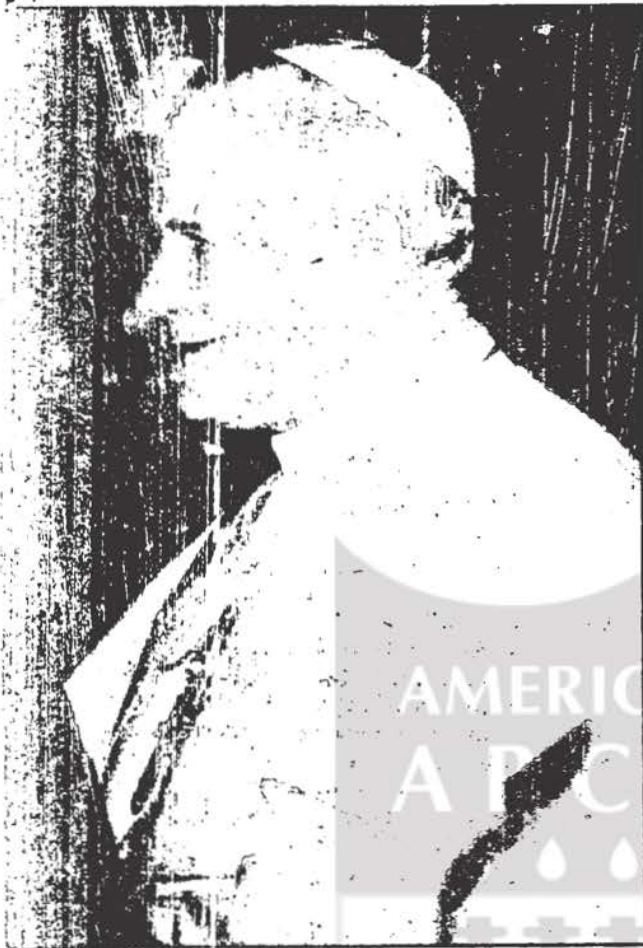
He went on to point out that in addition to the Vatican being the center of the Catholic Church, it is also a nation that has diplomatic relations with other nations. Thus, he said, "diplomatic recognition doesn't necessarily mean religious recognition."

But if asked his opinion, Graham said he would tell the Pope not to meet with Arafat because "I can't see how it could be effective in working toward peace."

Asked how such a meeting might affect Catholic-Jewish relations, Graham replied: "The Catholic Church is more than the Pope. Catholic-Jewish relations are not run by the push of a button from the Vatican. It took a long time to develop a strong network of relations and I don't see anything happening to disrupt that relationship."

He said also that he doesn't believe that more than "one or two people" in his congregation of 4,600 families were even aware of the planned Papal audience. He said the Jewish community is much more

ISAAC BEREZ



Pope John Paul II

aware of it because "Jews are in a beleaguered position right now. But this is a minor league kind of a thing and the less attention paid to it, the better."

Setback in Catholic-Jewish Relations

Nevertheless, Abraham H. Foxman, associate national director of the ADL and head of its International Affairs Division, said he believes the meeting will prove a "tremendous setback to Catholic-Jewish relations. There are no shadings about this. He's (the Pope) sending out the wrong signals. If they meet, it will be an embrace between the prince of peace and the king of terror. If the Pope meets with Arafat, it will be a slap in the face to all the victims of terrorist attacks. I can't fathom the reason for him doing this now."

One Jewish leader, Rabbi Simon Resnikoff, former president of the Long Island Board of Rabbis, said that although he is "appalled" by the planned meeting, he wanted to reserve final judgment until after it occurred.

"I can't justify the teachings of the Church with the behavior of the PLO and therefore I think that something is occurring that we might not know about just yet," Resnikoff said. "I want to wait and better understand why he has made the decision to extend this great honor to Arafat."

Tanenbaum said he believed that rabbis all over the world were working feverishly to rewrite their sermons for the High Holidays to include in it remarks about this meeting.

"We are now on the eve of the High Holidays, a time when Jewish emotions are their highest in the Jewish community," he said. "I am sure that rabbis all over the world will be speaking about the morality of this audience and its contribution to the decline of all moral standards in Western civilization."

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

ROY N. DE BUECK

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September 17, 1982

Most Rev. Pio Laghi,
Apostolic Delegate,
3339 Massachusetts Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Reverend Monsignor;

I have offered up to God my very grave concern that His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, has so cordially entertained Mr. Yasir Arafat, leader of a terrorist organization whose only military activity has been terrorist and unaccountable to the conventions of war.

Mr. Arafat represents an entity -- a faction of Palestinians -- which is sworn to the destruction of Israel and thus is anti-peace at its heart.

Please God this terrorist faction will not be revived. I pray rather that a legitimate, peace-minded, political coalition of Palestinians can be given opportunity to emerge to represent its people to the world.

Sincerely in Christ,

George J. Sheridan
Rev. George J. Sheridan

CC: Rabbi James Rudin
American Jewish Committee
Dr. Glenn A. Igleheart,
Baptist Home Mission Board

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, Sept. 24....The decision of Pope John Paul II to meet with Yasir Arafat "does not necessarily reflect the sentiments of all Catholics," according to two Catholic-Jewish Relations Committees in New York.

The committees today issued the following statement:

"The Catholic-Jewish Relations Committees of the Archdiocese of New York and the Diocese of Brooklyn are extremely concerned with the perception of the meeting between Pope John Paul II and Yasir Arafat.

"These committees understand that this meeting has caused great pain and anguish in the Jewish community and that many Catholics feel that same pain and anguish.

"While these committees are deeply troubled by this meeting between the Pope and Yasir Arafat, we do not question the motivation and good faith of the Pope.

"We believe the decision of the Holy Father to meet with Yasir Arafat does not necessarily reflect the sentiments of all Catholics throughout New York City or elsewhere.

"Therefore, we trust that the good faith engendered between Catholics and Jews since the 1965 promulgation of the Conciliar Declaration Nostra Aetate and the windows which it opened toward greater understanding and reconciliation between our two-faith communities, and the 1975 Vatican Guidelines regarding the implementation of Nostra Aetate should not be jeopardized but should be pursued with even greater vigor."

The Catholic-Jewish Relations Committee of New York is a joint project of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of New York, the New York Regional Office of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the New York Board of Rabbis, Graymoor Ecumenical Institute, the Union of American Hebrew Congregations - Department of Interreligious Affairs, the New York Federation of Reform Synagogues, and the Zionist Organization of America.

The Catholic-Jewish Relations Committee of Brooklyn is a joint project of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and ADL's New York Regional Office.

International Jewish Committee
on
Interreligious Consultations

AMERICAN SECRETARIAT:

Synagogue Council
of America

327 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016
Tel.: (212) 686-8670

September 15, 1982

MEMO

EUROPEAN SECRETARIAT:

World Jewish Congress

1 Rue de Varembe

1211 Geneve 20

Switzerland

Tel.: (022) 34 13 25

To: IJCIC Members
From: Henry D. Michelman

AMERICAN JEWISH
ARCHIVES

CONSTITUTENT AGENCIES:

American Jewish Committee

165 East 56th Street

New York, N.Y. 10022

Anti-Defamation League -

B'nai B'rith

823 United Nations Plaza

New York, N.Y. 10017

Israel Jewish Council

for Interreligious

Consultations

12A Koresh Street

P.O.B. 2028

Jerusalem

Israel 91020

Attached please find the text of Rabbi Wurzburger's
communication to Archbishop John R. Roach which followed
their telephone conversation of Monday, September 13.

Synagogue Council
of America

327 Lexington Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10016

World Jewish Congress

1 Park Avenue

New York, N.Y. 10016

SYNAGOGUE COUNCIL OF AMERICA 433 PARK AVENUE SOUTH • NEW YORK, N.Y. 10016 • (212) 686-8670
19 EAST 48th STREET 327 LEXINGTON AVENUE

NEWS

Contact:
Lisa G. Slansky
(212) 686-8670

Rabbi Walter S. Wurzburger, President of the Synagogue Council of America which represents the Jewish religious community in this country sent the following communication to Archbishop John R. Roach, President of the United States Catholic Bishops Conference:

"The Synagogue Council of America, representing the Jewish religious community in this country is deeply shocked by reports that Pope John Paul II is scheduled to grant an audience to Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

We are appalled that by the very act of receiving the chairman of the PLO, the Pontiff will confer the mantle of legitimacy upon a terrorist organization which has ruthlessly massacred civilians including women and children in Lebanon, Israel and in many parts of the world.

We find it impossible to understand that a religious leader committed to the sanctity of life is prepared to legitimize a terrorist organization that unabashedly advocates terrorism and which in its very covenant is committed to seek the annihilation of the State of Israel. We respectfully urge you to convey to the authorities in the Vatican our deepfelt consternation and anguish over the proposed audience to Yasser Arafat, which will not only prove counterproductive to the quest for peace in the Middle East but which is also bound to disturb the relationships between our religious communities."

The Synagogue Council of America is the national coordinating agency for the Conservative, Orthodox and Reform Rabbinic and Congregational organizations. Constituent agencies of the Synagogue Council are: Conservative: Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of America; Orthodox: Rabbinical Council of America and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; Reform: Central Conference of American Rabbis and Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

9/13/82

SCA is the national coordinating agency for the Conservative, Orthodox and Reform rabbinic and congregational organizations

CONSTITUENT AGENCIES

Conservative:	RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY	UNITED SYNAGOGUE OF AMERICA
Orthodox:	RABBINICAL COUNCIL OF AMERICA	UNION OF ORTHODOX JEWISH CONGREGATIONS OF AMERICA
Reform:	CENTRAL CONFERENCE OF AMERICAN RABBIS	UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

Anti-Defamation League

823 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017



ADL of B'nai B'rith

212-490-2525 Telex 649278

LYNNE IANNIELLO
Director, Communications

for Yasser

NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, Sept. 13....Kenneth J. Bialkin, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith today issued the following statement on the scheduled visit of Pope John Paul II and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yassir Arafat:

"We are dismayed that the Pope, a symbol of rectitude and compassion, would grant an audience to Yassir Arafat, the personification of modern day terrorism. For Arafat, the encounter with the Pope is a gift of recognition that murder, practiced often and indiscriminately, is not without its reward.

"We call upon the Pope to reconsider this gratuitous affront to all who abhor terrorism."

#

AJ,CP,IP,LAP,LAJ,RE-II,RE-I,MPR,BHFOR,BHN,BHR-82

The Pope and Arafat... Why?

D. News (30)



9.14.82 Bill Reel

THE POPE has disappointed me terribly," a dear friend who is Jewish told me yesterday. "I'd kill Arafat if I had a chance. If I thought I had a shot at it, I'd kill the son-of-a-bitch. He's a disciple of Hitler. He blows up buses full of Israeli school children. He machine-guns Israeli athletes at the Olympics. He lobbs explosives into groups of Israeli women and children. He's a cowardly terrorist bastard. He wants to wipe all

Jews off the face of the earth. I'm saddened by what the Pope has done. The Pope has really disappointed me.

"I can't get too mad at the Pope. He's a holy man who got where he is by the grace of God. I accept that. I have no ax to grind with Catholics. I grew up in Brooklyn with Italian and Irish and Polish kids. Nobody ever called me a kike or a Christ-killer. My mother kept a kosher home, she was a very devout Jew, but there was never any talk in our house against the *goyim*. Not a word of prejudice was ever uttered. I'm not anti-Catholic, and I don't assume Catholics are anti-Semitic.

"But I can't understand what the Pope would have to say to a bum like Arafat. What are they going to discuss? Only Arafat wins this one. He gets respectability, credibility, legitimacy. I'm disgusted with the TV networks for making a hero out of the slimy weasel. They kept showing him kissing babies in Lebanon, like he was some wonderful freedom-fighter. And now the Pope is having Arafat in for a chat. An awful lot of Jews believe that Pius XII sold us out to Hitler. Is John Paul II going to sell us out to Arafat?"

There was anguish in my friend's voice. He and I have occasionally discussed anti-Semitism, and I have expressed the view that there is more of it around than many people like to admit. A lot of Christians seem to have forgotten — or maybe they never knew — that Jesus was a Jew.

Not the Pope, though. Based on what he has said and

written, Pope John Paul is a friend of the people of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. With the greatest respect for the Jewish people and their feelings in this matter, I have to believe the Pope thinks he can do something to promote the cause of peace. How a meeting with Arafat can contribute to this is unclear, to say the least. The Pope hasn't said yet. I made a couple of calls to Catholic officials, and they were as much in the dark as the rest of us. There was some speculation that seemed hopeful and reasonable, however.

"Of course, we certainly appreciate the fact that this is a highly emotional issue to anyone who has been affected by events in the Middle East," Father Ed O'Brien, spokesman for the Archdiocese of New York, commented. "We have received many phone calls highly critical of the Pope. Some of the calls have been angry, almost violent. I was a guest on a radio program this morning with a leader of a Jewish organization who expressed dismay that the Pope would receive Arafat. He pointed to terrorist acts committed by Arafat, and he even cited evidence that the man who shot Pope John Paul had probably been trained by Arafat's people."

I REPLIED that Pope John Paul had been quick to forgive the man who tried to kill him. One of the first things he said when he got out of the hospital was that he forgave his attacker. The Pope is all too familiar with the horror of terrorism. But Popes traditionally have tried to be available to anyone if they thought it was in the interest of peace. If there is a ray of hope for peace in the Middle East, if there is a glimmer of light for peace, and if the Pope feels he can contribute to peace by seeing Arafat, then it would seem to be a useful initiative. Arafat is regarded by many Palestinians as a leader. Some of the means he used to achieve leadership were despicable. But if the Pope thinks that Arafat could be persuaded to play a diplomatic role in making peace in the Middle East, that would explain why he is seeing him.

As much as I can understand the outrage many Jews feel, I have to put in with Father O'Brien. I have to be hopeful. This drama is taking place a long way from New York. All we can do is pray for the Pope, pray for the Chosen People, pray for peace.

Israel E. Levine
Director of Communications
212-879-4500

For Immediate Release

AJCONGRESS DIRECTOR DEPLORES

POPE'S PLAN TO MEET ARAFAT

Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, expressed "shock" at the planned meeting between Pope John Paul II and P.L.O. leader Yasir Arafat.

A member of the International Liaison Committee of Catholics and Jews, Mr. Siegman has just returned from a meeting of the group in Milan in which a number of high Vatican officials participated. Noting irony in the fact that the meeting between the Pope and the terrorist leader comes on the heels of the interfaith effort, Mr. Siegman said the Pope's meeting with Arafat "cannot help but cause profound pain and offense" to those attempting to foster closer ties between Catholics and Jews. The liaison committee serves as a link between the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations and the Vatican Commission on Religious Relations with the Jews. The AJCongress official said he has cabled his sentiments to the Vatican.

Mr. Siegman's full statement follows:

I was profoundly distressed to learn on my return from the recently-held meeting of the International Liaison Committee of Catholics and Jews of the possibility of a meeting between Pope John Paul II and Yasir Arafat of the P.L.O. Since the theme of our consultation was "The Sanctity and Meaning of Human Life in Relation to the Present Situation of Violence," the news came as a very special shock.

While I fully understand the concern of the Catholic Church for the Palestinian people and for their legitimate aspirations, it is inconceivable that a meeting between the Pope and the head of the P.L.O. will not be seen as sanctioning by the Pope himself of the P.L.O. and the violent means they employ. Coming in the immediate aftermath of a meeting between the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations and the Vatican Committee on Religious Relations with the Jews, such a meeting cannot but cause profound pain and offense to the participants in that consultation.

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