



# 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 42, Folder 1, O'Connor, John [Cardinal], 1984-1986, 1990.



CARDINAL'S OFFICE  
1011 FIRST AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10022

March 8, 1990

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum,

Permit me to express my sincere appreciation for your remarks concerning the recent remarkably ugly comparison made about me.

As quoted in the Post, your comments could not have been more straightforward or unambiguous. They are both personally rewarding for me and another of many Tanenbaum contributions to Jewish-Catholic relations.

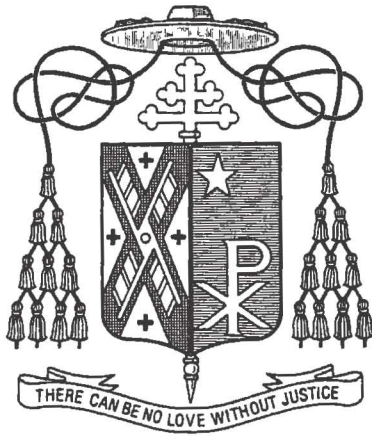
Warm personal regards, and

Faithfully,

Archbishop of New York

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56 Street  
New York, NY 10022

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ARCHBISHOP'S OFFICE  
1011 FIRST AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10022

November 26, 1984

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

As I mentioned in a recent speech, the holiday season in New York is a season of lights. In both our traditions the realization of the victory of God over the darkness of sin and oppression is cause for rejoicing and hope.

In our mutual efforts to serve the needs of our people and of our city our fraternity and cooperation is necessary. In an effort to foster this, I would be most delighted if you could join me at lunch on Tuesday, December 11th at 12:00 noon at my residence, 452 Madison Avenue.

I would appreciate it if you would call Father O'Brien or Father McCarthy at 371-1000 to let us know if you can be with us at that time.

Faithfully yours,

Archbishop of New York

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
Director of International Affairs Department  
American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th Street  
New York, New York 10022



CONVERSATION WITH JOHN CARDINAL O'CONNOR? JUNE 27, 1986

On Friday afternoon of this date, about 2 p.m., Msgr. Jim McCarthy, personal secretary to Cardinal O'Connor telephone me to say that the Cardinal could meet with me at 4:30 p.m. I was eager to get a first-hand sense of his views and feelings on his Lebanon and Rome trip, and therefore went to see him. (Ted Ellenoff could not make it; and David Gordis was not in the office.) We met in his small guest room and were alone for about an hour.

The Cardinal began by thanking me for my brief comment in the New York Times that said that he is "a friend of the Jewish people and a supporter of the security and well-being of the State of Israel." I immediately told him that even though that was a small excerpt of what I had said to the N.Y. Times reporter who called me from Rome, I have received a number of criticisms for defending him, I showed him a letter from a rabbi in Englewood, N.J., who said that while he understood what I was trying to do, let the Cardinal defend himself. I told the Cardinal that that rabbi and others who called me were disturbed by reports of what the Cardinal had said about "the Palestinian homeland" and his implication that Israel alone was responsible for their plight.

There was similar consternation over his statements that somehow Israel held the key to peace in Lebanon, and that Israel has some role to play in assuring the security of some 8 million Christians in the Arab world. I made the point forcefully that since 1982, it is Syria, the Shiite and Sunni Muslims, and Druse who hold the key to Lebanon's peace and to the future of Christians in Lebanon. Did he really intend to scapegoat Israel?

As to Israel's guaranteeing the security of Christians in Arab lands, I found that incomprehensible. Should he not have been addressing that responsibility to Arab leaders, not Israel?

On the Palestinian homeland, that is precisely what Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres was about in seeking out aggressively talks with King Hussein, searching for a formula in some "Jordanian option." It was King Hussein who publicly declared that the PLO's Yassir Arafat torpedoed that option. Why did he not deal with that fact fairly, and in a balanced way?

There was a lot of defensive phumpping back and forth. It is clear that he knows very little about the complexities of the Middle East. It is also clear - and I referred to it - that his tour was arranged by Msgr. John Nolan, head of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, which for decades has been involved in refugee care for Palestinian refugees. I mentioned that Msgr. Nolan has had a long-established reputation for being pro-Arab and anti-Israel, and he blinked vigorously.

Along the way in our polite but increasingly sharp talk, the Cardinal said a number of things of significance:

- 1) He made a number of pro-Palestinian, pro-Arab statements in order to establish his credibility in the Arab world. (He blurted that out in an almost confessional way.)
- 2) He knew he was risking some of his credibility in the Jewish community, but hoped that his good record on Jewish issues - particularly Soviet Jewry, the Nazi Holocaust, and anti-Semitism - would help



prevent too much erosion of his standing with the Jewish community.

3) He has been given "a semi-mandate" by Cardinal Casarolli and Archbishop Silvestrini of the Vatican Secretariat of State to become a principal "actor" for the Vatican on the Middle East. He said that while other Cardinals and Bishops have made occasional statements on the Middle East, none has concentrated on it as a central concern. He said he plans to do that. (Historically, Cardinal Spellman played such a role, but in a quieter, more diplomatic but politically potent way. Cardinal Cooke, a former social worker, contented himself with the social welfare aspects mainly of Palestinian and other Arab refugees.)

4) He said he favors "Vatican full diplomatic relations with Israel" but first a number of obstacles have to be gotten out of the way. He said the status of Jerusalem is not a problem; "the international statute" is a matter of formality. The preconditions for establishing diplomatic relations with Israel, he suggested, have to do with some resolution of the plight of the Palestinians; reinforcing peace in Lebanon; and somehow trying to assure the security of Arab Christians in the Middle East.

5) He made in somewhat emotional manner ~~xxxxx~~ a big point that he had a two-hour audience with ~~the~~ Pope John Paul II at which he reported on his Lebanon trip. He said the Pope would not abandon the Arab Christians and would do nothing that would lead to their further massacres.

O'Connor then said that if the Vatican were to establish diplomatic relations with Israel tomorrow, there is no question but that thousands of Christians would be killed in reprisal. We have to find a way to prevent that from happening.

In a nice way, I "presumed" to say that the Vatican is now paying the price for allowing itself to be intimidated and blackmailed by the extremist Muslims and Arabs. I reminded him that during Vatican Council II Nasser threatened reprisals against Arab Christians if Nostra Aetate would be adopted. Cardinal Bea refused to be intimidated. He made a public statement that the declaration was spiritual issue and has nothing to do with politics. He then secretly sent then Msgr. Willebrands to Egypt and Iraq to mollify the Arabs, but Bea proceeded undeterred in having the declaration adopted. Most of the threats petered out.

As Israel and American foreign policy have demonstrated, the Arab-Muslim leaders respect strength and exploit weakness. He just listened.

6) If he plans to become active in the Middle East, I then said, it is essential to his credibility that he visit Israel and meet with Prime Minister Peres and other Israeli political and religious leaders. He then asked me to explore that possibility with Peres' office since I was leaving for Israel on Sunday. He said he wanted to meet with the Prime Minister; only the question of schedule has to be worked out.

I told him I would be glad to do that. Once the decision is made, he would be hearing from me and/or from an appropriate Israeli official.

7) During our talk, he repeated several times that Vatican diplomatic relations would be helped if Israel made some public declaration of concern for the Palestinians, and the peace of Lebanon. I replied that Peres and other Israelis have done that often before; the issue is not statements but the political will of the Arabs to negotiate peace. But he would be free to discuss that with Peres and other Israelis.

clear to the Cardinal that most Jews I have spoken to are distressed over his having scapegoated Israel for everything that is wrong in the Middle East. His criticisms were misplaced; they should be addressed to the Arab leaders, not Israel. It is Syria and the Shiites and Sunni Muslims who have destabilized Lebanon and massacred about 100,000 Maronite Christians. It is Yasir Arafat who rejected the peace efforts of Shimon Peres and King Hussein who have avidly sought a resolution of the Palestinian ~~xxxxxxx~~ tragedy. And what does Israel have to do with assuring the security of Arab Christians in the Arab-Muslim world?

Among other responses, the Cardinal stated that he knew he had ~~credibility~~ with the Jewish community. He was now trying to establish his credibility with Arab-Palestinian world, with a view ~~xxxxxxxxx~~ eventually toward playing some mediating role between Israelis and Arabs.

Clearly that answer is insufficient and unconvincing from a Jewish point of view. But it is troublesome because it suggests a more ominous geo-political development that has taken place in recent weeks in Vatican-Israeli relations.  
months

Some ~~weeks~~ before I made a statement to the effect that a number of Cardinals and Bishops in Europe, ~~xxxxx~~ Latin America, and the U.S. told me independently that they felt the Vatican was moving toward establishing diplomatic relations with Israel. "Something is in the air in Rome," one Cardinal told me.



APR 9 1987

FOR YOUR INFORMATION  
Marc H. Tanenbaum



CARDINAL'S OFFICE  
1011 FIRST AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10022

April 8, 1987

Dear Rabbi Tannenbaum,

I wish to extend my warmest greetings and fervent prayers as you prepare to celebrate the feast of Pesach

As you celebrate this great Feast of Freedom, I join you in prayer as you kindle the festival lights.

Praised are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, for giving us life, for sustaining us and for enabling us to celebrate this festival.

Faithfully yours,

*John Cardinal O'Connor*  
Archbishop of New York

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum  
American Jewish Committee  
165 East 56th Street  
New York, New York 10022

M.T.

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVE



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## **O'Connor plans Leb 'rescue mission'**

By LINDA STEVENS

JOHN Cardinal O'Connor yesterday said he would visit war-torn Lebanon — possibly before the end of the year.

"It has been requested that I personally go, to show the support of the people of this archdiocese for Christians and Catholics now in peril in Lebanon," O'Connor said at St. Patrick's Cathedral.

"They are in danger of being crushed in the nation that has been the homeland — the beacon of light — of Christians in the Middle East."

Members of religious minorities have come under increasing attack in Lebanon in recent years, although that nation has historically been the Middle East's one bastion of religious freedom.

Literally thousands of Christian civilians — men, women and children — have been slaughtered by the warring factions, and their churches have been destroyed.

"The destruction of Lebanon is a grave, grave matter indeed and a crisis there is imminent," said the cardinal.

The request for O'Connor to go would have to have been issued by the Vatican.



## VANDALS HIT 14-JEWISH OWNED STORES IN ORTHODOX SECTION OF BROOKLYN

NEW YORK, Nov. 11 (JTA) — Vandalism against Jewish-owned stores in the heavily Orthodox Boro Park section of Brooklyn Friday night or early Saturday has aroused serious concern among community leaders who believe it was a premeditated act of anti-Semitism planned to coincide with the 47th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the destruction of Jewish property in Nazi Germany during the night of November 8-9, 1938.

Rabbi Israel Steinberg, director of community relations of the New York State Division of Human Rights, a Boro Park resident, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the windows of 14 Jewish-owned or Jewish-identified shops were smashed with "heavy rocks" along a 10-block stretch of 13th Avenue, the neighborhood shopping center.

Non-Jewish shops and businesses were untouched, he said. There was no graffiti or slogans. The vandalism occurred between midnight Friday and 6 a.m. Saturday. Steinberg said damage to the windows alone would amount to about \$3,000. Merchandise was damaged but there were no thefts.

### Feels Vandalism Was 'Well Planned'

New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind, who represents the district, said he inspected the damage Sunday. He told the JTA he was convinced the vandalism was "well planned" and "methodical." He agreed with Steinberg that the act could have been timed to coincide with the Kristallnacht anniversary and the 10th anniversary of the passage of the "Zionism is Racism" resolution by the UN General Assembly on November 10, 1975. He also suggested that the anti-Semitic attacks by the Rev. Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam, could have been a factor.

Hikind noted that more Holocaust survivors live in Boro Park than in any other part of the country. Steinberg said the rock-throwers must have been outsiders. He said there have been no racial incidents in the neighborhood.

Hikind and Steinberg, who met yesterday with Capt. Donald Thrash of the 66th Precinct, said the police have classified the vandalism as a "bias incident," meaning racially motivated and detectives of the special "bias squad" have been assigned to the investigation.

But Sgt. Diane Kubler of the Police Department's information office told the JTA there was no evidence yet to "substantiate" racial motivation. She said detectives are canvassing the area for witnesses. So far no suspects have been apprehended.

### YOUNG JEW STABBED NEAR DAMASCUS GATE

JERUSALEM, Nov. 11 (JTA) — A 20-year-old Jewish man was stabbed and seriously wounded near the Damascus Gate in the Old City last evening. He was rushed to Hadassah Hospital on Mt. Scopus where he underwent emergency surgery.

According to police reports, the man, Yosef Martin, age 24, was strolling with a woman friend when a lone assailant plunged a kitchen knife into his back. The weapon may have punctured his lung.

The incident was the second attack on Israeli civilians this weekend and the second stabbing in a week near the Damascus Gate. On Friday night a

Jewish settler, Gabi Bartal, 30, of Beit Hagai in the Hebron region of the West Bank, was ambushed while driving from his home to Kiryat Arba. He was treated at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem for hand and leg wounds.

Last week, a 60-year-old man was stabbed while shopping near Damascus Gate. He is still hospitalized.

### N.Y. ARCHBISHOP URGES PARISH PRIESTS TO LIGHT CANDLES FOR SOVIET JEWS ON EVE OF REAGAN-GORBACHEV MEETING

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Nov. 11 (JTA) — John Cardinal O'Connor has written a letter to all parish priests of the Archdiocese of New York urging them to light a candle for Soviet Jews on the eve of the summit meeting next week between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Recalling paragraph four of the Second Vatican Council's document *Nostra Aetate*, which deplored persecution and anti-Semitism, the Cardinal wrote to the 450 parish priests of the Archdiocese, "In this spirit of Christian charity, I ask you and your parishes to observe November 18 as a day of remembrance for persecuted Jews.

"I ask you and your parishioners to light a candle on the evening of the 18th to pray for world peace and the release of Soviet Jewish prisoners," O'Connor wrote in the letter dated November 5. A copy of the letter was provided to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by Rabbi Allan Meyerowitz, Soviet Jewry chairman of the Rabbinical Assembly, the international association of Conservative Rabbis.

Meyerowitz said today that the letter was in reaction to an appeal last month by the RA to O'Connor that the Archdiocese, which represents some two million Catholics in New York, make some sort of public gesture on behalf of Soviet Jews. Meyerowitz said similar action involving Archdioceses in other cities was underway.

### 'Quite Moved' By Issue Of Soviet Jews

The Cardinal, in his letter, noted that he was "quite moved" on the issue of Soviet Jews last month when he spoke at a day-long conference at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, sponsored by the RA. At that conference, O'Connor recalled in the letter, "a Jewish seminarian, Leonard Feldman, spoke vividly about his experience in his native land, the Soviet Union.

"Leonard recounted how his countrymen persecuted him and his family as well as other Soviet Jews. I was quite moved by Leonard Feldman's account of what it meant to be a Jew in the Soviet Union," O'Connor wrote. Feldman was a refusenik who now studies at the JTS.

Meyerowitz, meanwhile, announced that local rabbis will stage civil disobedience and protest demonstrations on behalf of Soviet Jewry outside the Soviet Embassy in Washington next Sunday; in San Francisco, November 18, outside the Soviet Consulate; and in New York November 19 at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations.



## FRANKFURT MAYOR URGES DIRECTOR OF ANTI-SEMITIC PLAY NOT TO STAGE IT

FRANKFURT, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Mayor Walter Wallman of Frankfurt said today he could not ban the performance of an anti-Semitic play by the late Rainer Werner Fassbinder but he urged the director of the government-supported Frankfurt Theater, Guenther Ruehle, not to stage it.

Wallman announced his decision to a largely Jewish audience attending a service at Frankfurt's main synagogue marking the 47th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the first nationwide pogrom conducted by the Nazis against Germany's Jews. The synagogue was packed with journalists from Germany and abroad.

The play, titled "Der Muell, Die Stadt und der Todt (Garbage, the City and Death), has as its central character a ruthless real estate speculator who in the original version is known as "the rich Jew." The play has been modified to eliminate that appellation but German Jews and non-Jews -- Wallman among them -- consider it anti-Semitic.

It has been the center of a fierce controversy in West Germany since Ruehle was forced to cancel the premier on October 31 when the stage was occupied by 25 Jewish protestors who had purchased the tickets. Ruehle insists that the play will have its second premier this Wednesday, November 13.

Wallman said he could not ban the play, as urged by the Jewish community, because such a step could easily be challenged as a violation of constitutional guarantees of freedom of artistic expression. Hermann Alter, a spokesman for the Jewish community, declared that anti-Semitism is not art and therefore a ban would not be censorship.

He was supported by Karl Schneider, Minister of Culture of the Federal State of Hesse, who declared, "The feelings of those who have suffered under the Nazis is the reality. No third party can decide what those people ought to be able to put up with in the name of freedom of art."

## BATTLE OF THE BUDGET

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Israeli policymakers are locked in a battle of the budget. Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai is urging cuts totalling a half billion dollars in the 1986-87 budgets of the Defense, Education and Health Ministries. Premier Shimon Peres is adamantly opposed.

The budget for the next fiscal year must be submitted to the Cabinet soon. A series of meetings between Peres and Modai has failed to break the deadlock. Modai reportedly has warned that without the specific cuts, important goals of his economic austerity program will not be met on schedule.

After a late night meeting last Thursday, aides to Peres said the Premier would allow "no further blows at defense, education and health." They noted that cuts in the defense budget inevitably resulted in lay-offs and closures throughout the economy because the defense establishment is a major contractor of a host of civilian industries.

There is a political element in the economic discussions. The three ministries most affected are headed by Laborites -- Yitzhak Rabin, Defense; Yitzhak Navon, Education; and Mordachai Gur, Health. Modai is a Likud Liberal and there is suspicion in Labor circles that his demand for cuts is motivated at least partly by partisan political considerations.

Meanwhile, the government has relaxed its policy toward certain sectors of the economy that are in especially dire straits. The Cabinet last week approved a \$90 million loan to farmers and agreed to make \$50 million in government funds available to hard-pressed local authorities. Development towns have been exempted from the blanket freeze on public building and investment.

Also under consideration is the creation of a \$100 million loan fund to business firms facing serious but temporary economic problems. Hebrew University economist Michael Bruno, one of the authors of the government's austerity program, said in a speech last week that while he opposed indiscriminate government bail-outs of failing businesses, he did believe that certain companies which are fundamentally sound should be helped by the government through temporary difficulties brought about by the economic squeeze.

Among such firms hard hit of late are Elscint, the Haifa-based manufacturer of medical equipment, and Solel Boneh, Histadrut's giant construction company.

## Balance Of Trade Gap Narrowing

Meanwhile, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced that Israel's balance of trade gap in the last quarter was 27 percent smaller than in the same three month period last year. That good news was tempered by official concern over a recent rise in the import of consumer durables, including cars. They attribute it to the anticipation by dealers of a consumer buying spree fueled by the redemption by old-age pensioners of their frozen bank shares.

Persons under 65 who held bank shares when the market collapsed in October, 1983, are now permitted to sell them. Other share-holders must wait five years. The government is seeking ways to soak up this suddenly available money.

## STREET NAMED 'RAOUL WALLENBERG PLACE'

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- The Senate has approved legislation to name a street in front of the soon-to-be built U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum as "Raoul Wallenberg Place" in honor of the Swedish diplomat who saved some 100,000 Jews in Hungary during World War II.

The naming of the street was in an amendment to the District of Columbia Appropriation Bill introduced by Sen. Carl Levin (D. Mich.). The House took similar action earlier this year. Levin said it was "appropriate" that the street be named for Wallenberg, "a man who saved so many from the horror of the Holocaust."

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JERUSALEM (JTA) -- An official delegation representing the Jordanian Ministry of Agriculture visited Israel recently and spent four days talking to Arab farmers in the West Bank, Deputy Minister of Agriculture Avraham Katz-Oz disclosed Friday. He said it was the fourth such visit by an agricultural working group from Jordan. He said the visitors crossed the Jordan River bridge and reported formally to the Israel government and to the West Bank Military Governor before embarking on their tour of Arab farms in the territory. Katz-Oz met with them in his official capacity. Jordan still maintains nominal responsibility for Arab residents in the West Bank who are governed by Jordanian law. The Amman government pays the salaries of local Arab civil servants and school teachers -- in addition to the salaries they are paid by Israel.



# O'CONNOR GIVES KOCH HIS BLESSING



CARDINAL O'CONNOR  
Praying for city.

IT would be exceedingly difficult for me to believe that Mayor Koch has been guilty of any dishonesty.

I am in no position to comment on allegations that he should have known this, that or the other thing. But certainly, in regard to his personal honesty — as someone who has strongly disagreed with him on matters that I believe to be of major concern to the city and the church — I have never

Interviewed Sunday in his sacristy at St. Patrick's Cathedral, JOHN CARDINAL O'CONNOR spoke to The Post's LINDA STEVENS about the controversy surrounding besieged MAYOR KOCH.

failed to respect his honesty, and I repeat that I would find it extremely difficult to think of Mayor Koch as a dishonest man.

I feel very bad, of course, about what has happened in the city, and bad that a man who has certainly committed himself with

almost incredible vigor and zest to the enormously complex task of administering the city of New York can do so, and now it's as though he had done nothing for the city.

It's as though because of alleged failures — and I leave that determination to

others — he hadn't thrown himself so fully into the governing of this city.

I'm not originally a New Yorker, but I'm familiar enough with this city to know that it has certainly fallen upon hard times in many respects.

And a man came along and just by force of his personality — but more, the force of total dedication of his life to the life of this city — brought about a renewal of pride and cer-

tainly helped generate the new image New York critically needed at the time.

It pains me to see that now treated by some as though it counted for nothing.

Clearly, I cannot in any way condone corruption, although I can understand it. That's my business, as a churchman, as a priest, which is my fundamental task. I can understand cor-

Continued on Page 47

## O'Connor gives mayor his blessing — says he prays for the city

Continued from Page 7

ruption, I can understand evil.

I can have compassion for those who have suffered and been victimized and unjustly deprived as a result of corruption, and I can have compassion for those who yield to temptation.

I'm praying very hard for those of us who have been victimized by corruption.

And I pray for those, and the families of those, who now — because they apparently yielded to temptation — are themselves in very deep trouble.

But for me, at this stage, to forget or ignore what a mayor has done who just a handful of

months ago was being talked of by many as one of the truly great mayors New York has ever had for me that would be very painful.

That may sound strange coming from me. I assume I'm the only archbishop in the history of New York who's engaged in civil lawsuits with New York's mayor.

Our disagreements on some critical issues are widely known to the public. The mayor disagrees completely with what I present as the church's position on abortion, the

church's position on homosexuality, things that to me are crucial issues.

We disagree flatly, and he as a mayor — not as a person — has fought me on them [the issues].

But we have nevertheless remained friends and it is certainly my intention to maintain that friendship.

I have come, in a very short period of time, to love this city.

I think that in many respects it's a very chaotic city, and I think that its needs are crucial.

I do not condone what I

see to be continuing gross neglect of the starving and the homeless, for whom I think the city has done a fraction of what must be done.

I think there are far too many things in the city that don't work, and there is still far too little understanding of the exploitation and oppression of minorities — blacks, Hispanics and others.

And there's far too much tension in the city.

But all the good, I think, is recoverable, and all the problems are soluble.

But the good is not

going to be recovered and the problems are not going to be solved if we lose faith.

It is no secret to Mayor Koch that I wish he would do some things very differently, and that he would take significantly different positions from the ones he takes on certain issues.

But I believe he can still achieve what must be achieved to begin the restoration of this city to its former greatness.

And I conclude as I began: I continue my unconditional belief in his personal honesty, and I continue to consider him a friend.