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

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 45, Folder 10, Shuster, Zachariah, 1970.

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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FO-Eur
January 19, 1970

MEMORANDUM

To: Messrs. Gold, Segal, Tanenbaum
From: Zachariah Shuster
Subj: Vatican Statement on Jews

From a most reliable source I learned the following with regard to the Vatican statement on Jews in implementation of the declaration of Vatican Council II.

At the session of the Secretariat for Christian Unity which took place in November, 1969, there were appointed three committees from the participants at the meeting: an American-English committee; a French committee; an Italian-Spanish committee. Each was given the draft of the statement that was prepared in the spring of 1969, with some minor additions; and was asked to examine this text and comment on it.

The French committee, some of whose members are very conservative, raised strong objections to the text; while the Americans asked for the insertion of some constructive details. Finally, the Secretariat adopted the text in the form submitted by Prof. Rijk, with some insignificant modifications.

Cardinal Shehan, after his return to the U.S., reported at a press conference the general contents of this draft. The newspapermen then asked him to show them the text, and he gave it to them. This was the draft in English, without the last changes, and it was this text that was published in the American newspapers. There is a guess here that the reason for Cardinal Shehan's making public the draft before it was officially announced by the Secretariat in Rome, was that he was seriously concerned that the conservatives in Rome would try to make fundamental changes in the text and also, perhaps, try to influence the Pope that it not be published at all.

After the text of the draft became known in Vatican circles, the conservatives, led by Father Dumont, formerly the head of the Center "Istina" in Paris, started an intensive campaign against it. Ordinarily, the Pope would have signed the text after submission by the Secretariat for Christian Unity. However, because of the opposition of the conservatives, the Pope asked Msgr. Benelli, who is a member of the Political Secretariat of the Vatican, to appoint a committee of experts, whose task would be to examine the text again. It is believed in Rome that the members of the committee appointed by Benelli are primarily conservatives who are opposed to the issuing of the statement. Cardinal Willot, Secretary of State of the Vatican, and Cardinal Willebrands, gave assurances that they will advise the Pope not to agree to any changes in the text and maintain it as it was published in the American press; but it is not certain whether they will prevail in this matter. At any rate, the text will not be published for many weeks, and at this moment it is not sure whether it will be published at all, nor what its contents will be.