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The American Jewish Committee

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NIVES E. FOX, European Representative

January 10, 1985

MEMORANDUM

To: International Relations Department
From: Nives Fox
Subj: Holland

The Dutch branch of the World Council of Churches seems to reflect the worse aspects of this body's position toward Israel, and has been particularly militant in this area during the past few months.

Taken in sequel, one might begin with the Dutch Council of Churches representatives' visit to the Middle East last October (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Egypt). At each stop meetings and conversations were held with many Christian community leaders as well as with Palestinian groups. The timing of the stay in Israel was a poor one to begin with, Roch Hashanah, and made it impossible for the group to meet with important Israeli political or religious leaders. Upon return to Holland, a declaration was made by the Council participants expressing shock over human rights violations committed by Israel in the West Bank.

In December, the Council released a press communique concerning the so-called first official meeting with PLO representatives in Holland (it was not at all a first meeting, but the "official" label covered the outright lie). In the release Mr. Khoury's declaration (Khoury is a Protestant) favoring the rights of every people to live in the Middle East, was creatively interpreted as proof that the PLO recognized Israel. It should be noted, too, that in 1983 the Dutch Council of Churches and the International Council of Christians and Jews agreed to have advance consultations before any and every action taken concerning the Middle East. No such consultation took place about the PLO meeting, the release, or previous declarations.

A day or two after the meeting with Mr. Khoury the Dutch Council sent a letter to the Second Chamber (the more important of the two Dutch parliamentary houses) asking for a hearing on human rights abuses by Israel in the West Bank. Though this letter was not made public, friends in the community were able to get a copy and did so. The story created a bit of an uproar in that it was clearly pointed out how among all the countries visited by the Council only Israel warranted criticism. It is very doubtful

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whether agreement for the hearing will be granted, and the decision will not be known until March in any case.

Though not the Dutch Council of Churches official position, there are members within it, and in the WCC as well, whose criticism of Israel goes beyond the above, namely to challenge the very name of the State of Israel as an abuse of world Christianity; and who would urge an inquiry on the legitimacy of Jewish historical and religious rights to the land of Canaan. The rationale, if it may so be called, is that "Israel was the land promised to the Jews of the Bible..." If this is a common enough contention among Arabs and some Western political sympathizers of the Arab and Palestinian cause, it is certainly the first time I hear it from Christian religious bodies.

Be that as it may, it certainly is one of the reasons why the Jewish religious representatives in Holland have ceased contact with the Dutch Council.

The Jewish community in the Netherlands is not excessively worried about this kind of delegitimization challenges or, for that matter, the possibility of Second Chamber hearings about Israel human rights violations. Perhaps over-optimistic, the feeling is that a row over such views would boomerang and even benefit Jews and Israel because so contrary to fundamental attitudes and sympathies of Christian public opinion. As said before, there is doubt that the request for the hearing will be granted; and certainly it will not be supported by the ICCJ.

Nonetheless, efforts of this type do point to a continuing deterioration in the Dutch Council positions with regard to Israel and increased support for Palestinians.

With this general harsher position of Christian Churches there has developed a sort of parallel in the position taken by the Jewish community in connection with the visit to Holland by Pope John Paul II, this coming May.

As you know, Jewish communities have had brief meetings with the Pope in all the countries he visited (and where there was one); but the Dutch Jews have refused a meeting unless certain conditions are met. These are: Vatican de jure recognition of the State of Israel; a tribute to the victims of the Choah and an admission of guilt for persecution of Jews during 2000 years; a meeting on Jewish ground, with freedom to cover all subjects; and a press release afterwards covering everything said during the meeting. To date the Jewish position remains unchanged; and it is not very likely that the conditions posed will be met. The Dutch press has reported the Jewish refusal extensively, and I have seen ~~some~~ in the European press. Perhaps more interesting is that some Protestant groups also oppose meeting with the Pope in May; and that the President of the Dutch Parliament's Second Chamber, Dick Dolman (Socialist Party) publicly

declared that if there is disagreement among religious groups over meeting John Paul II he will also refuse to see him. The same Mr. Dolman (a very good friend of the Jews) also refused to join a Dutch parliamentary mission to Rome, declaring that the Vatican is not a democratic state because it has no parliament.

There has been increased rumbling in several European countries over the issue of shechita, and Holland too is suddenly right in the middle of what may well become a serious problem. Ritual slaughtering in the Netherlands not only supplies domestic needs but also includes considerable export, to supply kosher meat in Switzerland, Israel and Gibraltar -- some 350,000 animals a year. A few months ago the Dutch Secretary of State for Agriculture sent letters to all exporters of kosher meat saying that no licences will be granted in the future unless stunning is used in killing animals. This condition, however, he added, would not affect the animals killed for domestic consumption. The community responded by pointing out the absurdity of such a regulation and pointing out that if the government position was that shechita was cruel and hurt animals for export, then obviously keeping to the ritual for home consumption also was endangered. The gentleman disagreed, all the while acknowledging that the end of kosher meat exports was indeed an unwelcome economic loss, yet reiterating that conditions for home use remained the same; but insisting that the welfare of animals was foremost.

Another coincidence in this matter is that the neo-Nazi Center Party, which finally won a seat in the 1983 Dutch elections, has campaigned for years against both Jewish and Moslem slaughtering. When elected, one of their first manifestations was to display a large poster in front of the Mosque and to tie up a bunch of pigs along it, to protest the cruelty of Moslem slaughtering. A small detail: the head of the party is a butcher!

Precisely because of the behavior of the Center Party and dear as the cause may be, animal protection societies are taking a back seat on the shechita issue, in their wish to distance themselves from the Center Party.

There are by now enough shechita difficulties in Europe -- the community in Sweden ~~is~~ fighting and only partly won rebates on very high import taxes for kosher meat; the Italians have had a bit of trouble; the Swiss for years have been denied the right to slaughter and must import; etc. -- for WJC to have decided on a European meeting to discuss all this. In spite of the projected meeting, my Jewish community friend believes AJC should take up the cudgel on ~~xxxxxx~~ ~~xx~~ the particularly irrational position taken in Holland. I would therefore suggest that on one of the many trips to Washington AJC include a visit ~~xxxx~~ to the Dutch Embassy to express its dismay and preoccupation over this strange state of kosher meat affairs.

cc: Tanenbaum ✓
Harris