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Series D: International Relations Activities. 1961-1992

Box 64, Folder 10, Italy, 1984-1986.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS DELEGATION TO ITALY

February 10 - February 14, 1985

TENTATIVE AGENDA

Our forthcoming mission to Italy and the Vatican present a number of important opportunities to AJC for discussion of major current issues. On January 1, 1985, Italy assumes the presidency of the European Economic Community for a period of six months, a position of considerable influence in that key regional grouping. Further, Italy has in recent years taken a more active position in the Middle East, including its deployment of troops in Lebanon in 1982. Political and commercial contacts with the Soviet Union have been quite extensive. Its interests in Africa and Latin America are considerable. And, internally, relations between the State and the Catholic church and other religious groups including the Jewish community, have undergone a major change as a result of the recently-negotiated Concordat.

In our discussions with the Italian government, and indeed with Vatican officials, we plan to address such issues as international human rights, including Soviet Jewry and the follow-up meetings on human rights, culture and family reunification to the Madrid Review Conference of the Helsinki Final Act; the Middle East and relations with Israel; religious tolerance; world refugee problems; international terrorism; East/West and North/South relations; the United Nations, its specialized agencies and the Nairobi Conference; and bilateral Italian-American ties.

ROME, ITALY

We plan to meet with:

Senior Italian Government officials, including Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti

Senior Vatican officials and U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See William Wilson

Leading parliamentary, political party, press and religious figures in Italian society

Leaders of the Italian Jewish community, including Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, and Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff

U.S. Ambassador Maxwell Rabb and his staff

Israeli Ambassador Eitan Ron and his staff

(over)

SIGHTS

In addition to the general sights, we will be visiting those of special Jewish interest including:

The JEWISH CATACOMBS. With their ancient and historic engravings which have become available for viewing since the recent re-negotiations of the Concordat.

The GHETTO OF ROME. Established in 1556 by Pope Paul IV

The GREAT SYNAGOGUE Dedicated in 1091

PRO DEO UNIVERSITY. Officially known as the International University of Social Studies. In 1965 Judge Joseph Proskauer addressed an audience of cardinals at the dedication of Kaufman Hall. The AJC has been involved with a number of projects at this institution.

HOTEL: Excelsior Hotel
Via Vittorio Veneto 125
1-00187 Rome
(6) 47-08 (Country code
for direct dialing is 39)

FLIGHTS: February 10:
Tel Aviv/Rome, Alitalia
Fl. 747 6:15 - 8:50 PM

February 14:
Rome/New York, Alitalia
Fl. 610, 11:50 AM - 3:00 PM

December 14, 1984
J-47
84-100-250

Ms. Tullia Zevi, President
Italian Jewish Community
etc.

My Dear Tullia,

My warmest good wishes to you and your family for a happy and healthy Ghanukah. May the light of peace and tranquility light up over Klal Yisroel and all mankind.

As you know, my colleague, David Harris, deputy director of this department was in Rome and met with your associate, Mr. Emanuel Ascarelli, prior to his mission to Ethiopia.

I wanted to share with you a progress report on our mission to Italy from February 10 until Feb. 15. We have met with the Italian Embassy officials in Washington and has asked their assistance in arranging meetings with the Italian President, Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. They responded warmly and have promised to do so.

We are also arranging through our contacts here meetings with ~~Amx~~ U.S. Ambassador Maxwell Rabb, the U. S. Ambassador to the Vatican, Mr. Wilson, and with the Israeli Embassy. In addition, we have taken steps to have a meeting with Chief Rabbi Toaff and with Pope John Paul II.

My purpose in writing to you now is to request formally a meeting with you and the Italian Jewish leadership. We would like to be our first meeting on February 11th as a means of having the benefit of your views on major issues affecting Italian Jewry. We would also very much welcome your advice in preparation for our other meetings with Italian Government officials and the Vatican.

If you think it would be ~~useful~~ useful for our AJC leaders, headed by our President, Howard I. Friedman, to visit selected sites of particular Jewish interest, we would certainly welcome that under your guidance.

We leave on our mission to Israel from January 28th through February 10th and then will embark for Rome. It would be helpful to learn from you as early as possible about arrangements for our consultation with you and Italian Jewish leadership.

With warmest good wishes, I am,
Cordially,

RMHT DIRD

Monsignor Jorge Meia, title
Vatican Secretariat for Relations with Judaism
address
Vatican City, Italy

Dear Jorge,

I was delighted to be with you at the WCC-IJCIC Conference on Religious Pluralism at Harvard Divinity School last week.

I am writing you officially in behalf of the American Jewish Committee to request an audience with His Holiness Pope John Paul II. The group that will be coming to Rome will be the highest officers of the American Jewish Committee, headed by our President, Howard I. Friedman.

We plan to be in Rome from February 11 through the 15th. Our program calls for meetings of our AJC leaders with the President, Prime Minister, and Foreign Minister of Italy. We will also be meeting with the ~~xxxxxxx~~ American Ambassador, the Hon. Maxwell Rabb (a longtime friend), the U.S. Ambassador to the Holy See, as well as with the ~~leaders~~ of the Italian Jewish community, and Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff.

In light of that schedule, it would probably be most appropriate if our private audience could be arranged with the Holy Father on either on February 13 or 14. We would, however, adjust our schedule to conform to his convenience.

The purpose of our mission, as we see it, would be several-fold:

(a) AJC, as the oldest Jewish human relations organization in the United States, has a long and abiding interest in supporting the cause of human rights of all peoples - a cause which we know we share deeply with Pope John Paul II;

(b) We are deeply concerned and have been profoundly involved in the problems of world refugees and world hunger. ~~xxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxx~~ Presently, as you will see from the enclosed reports, we are vigorously engaged in mobilizing broad interreligious support to relieve the terrible suffering in Ethiopia and Africa. We have been doing this cooperatively with Catholic Relief Services, Church World Services, and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

(c) We are intimately involved in preparing studies and conferences in relation to the United Nations program on Religious Intolerance, whose ultimate purpose is to advance the cause of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

(d) Since Vatican Council II, we have had a major preoccupation with promoting understanding and friendship between ~~xxxxxxx~~ the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, having pioneered in the religious self-studies of all major religious groups.

In view of the fact that October 1985 will mark the 20th anniversary of the adoption of Nostre Aetate, with which AJC was so closely related, our audience with Pope John Paul II would afford a wonderful

opportunity to acknowledge the historic importance of that document and its beneficial effects in many parts of the world.

Prior to our coming to Italy, our leaders will be in Israel on a mission of reconciliation. We will be meeting with Israeli Government leaders, but also with major Christian and Muslim personalities, all in the interest of promoting peace and mutual respect.

I would be grateful if you would let me know at your earliest convenience of the possibilities of arranging this important audience. We leave for Israel on January 28th and therefore it would be helpful to have some idea about the date and time of the audience with the Pope early in January if that is feasible.

With deep appreciation, and my warmest personal good wishes for a Blessed Christmas to you, your family, and your colleagues, I am,

Fraternally yours,

Rabbi MHT, Dir
IRD





The American Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N.Y. 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N.Y.

December 12, 1984

Mr. Emanuel Ascarelli
Union of Italian Jewish Communities
Lungotevere Sansio, 9
Rome, Italy

Dear Emanuel:

Having only recently returned from a fascinating, difficult and sobering visit to Ethiopia, this is my first chance to thank you for our meeting on November 19. It was a pleasure to discuss with you the purposes of our mission in February, and I know that Rabbi Tanenbaum has now followed up with a letter to Tullia.

As it turns out, I will be accompanying the group going to Spain, therefore, while I will not see you in February, I do hope we will remain in contact.

With best wishes for a Happy Chanukah and a healthy and peaceful New Year.

Sincerely,

David A. Harris
Deputy Director
International Relations Department

DAH:RPR

bc: Marc Tanenbaum, David Geller, Nives Fox

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December 12, 1984

Mr. Nathan Ben-Horin
Embassy of Israel
Via Mercati 12
Rome, Italy

Dear Mr. Ben-Horin:

I would like to express my appreciation for our meeting on November 19. It was most informative and helpful to our understanding of current Vatican thinking vis-a-vis Jews, Judaism and Israel, and I have shared the substance of our discussion with Marc Tanenbaum.

Marc, who is currently overseas, will, upon his return, be in direct touch to give you the information you requested on his meetings with the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy and Archbishop Lustiger in Paris, and on his forthcoming visit to Italy. He will, as I described to you, come with the American Jewish Committee's delegation to Rome and the Vatican from February 10 to 14.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

David A. Harris
Deputy Director
International Relations Department

DAH:RPR

bc: Marc Tanenbaum ✓

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December 12, 1984

Mr. Shlomo Bino
Embassy of Israel
Via Mercati, 12
Rome, Italy

Dear Mr. Bino:

Having just returned from a fascinating and sobering visit to Ethiopia, this is my first opportunity to thank you for our meeting of November 19. It was most helpful to be able to convey to you the purpose of our planned visit in February, and to gain from you first-hand information and advice.

I do hope we shall remain in contact and that you will forward any further counsel or suggestions that you feel may be pertinent in the planning of our visit. And our group, which will be led by Howard Friedman, President of the American Jewish Committee, looks forward to meeting with the Ambassador, yourself and other Embassy officials shortly after arrival in Rome.

With best wishes.

Sincerely,

David A. Harris
Deputy Director
International Relations Department

DAH:RPR

bc: Marc Tanenbaum ✓
David Geller
Nives Fox

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date December 14, 1984

to Marc H. Tanenbaum

from David A. Harris

subject Mission to Italy

I spoke with Minister-Counsellor Tallarigo of the Italian Embassy this morning. While he had no new information, he assured me he would cable Rome today requesting further news about our mission and will be in touch upon receipt of same.

cc: David Geller



To: Marc H. Tanenbaum

From: David Harris

Date: January 24, 1985

Re: Meeting with Italian Defense Minister

A meeting with Italian Defense Minister Giovanni SPADOLINI has been arranged for Friday, January 25th at 6:15 p.m., at Columbia University's School of International Affairs, 420 West 118 Street (corner of Amsterdam Avenue), in the Dag Hamerskjold Room on the 6th floor. The contacts for us will be Consul Pini and Vice Consul Roscigno. (Note: Spadolini will be lecturing in the Hamerskjold Room from 5:30 to 6:15 p.m. and we are welcome to attend.)

Our meeting can last no longer than 15-20 minutes as Spadolini has a 6:30 p.m. reception across the street at the Casa Italiana. He is, however, reportedly anxious to meet with us and this session will, it is hoped, provide an opportunity to arrange a more formal meeting for the AJC delegation next month.

Minister Spadolini is a leader of the small Republican Party (PRI) and served as Italian prime minister (the first non-Christian Democrat in 37 years) from June 1981 to November 1982. The PRI foreign policy stance is pro-Western and pro-NATO, and its domestic views are moderately left-of-center.

Spadolini and the PRI are considered friends of Israel. Bear in mind that much of Spadolini's attention as Defense Minister has been directed to Lebanon where Italian troops were deployed together with U.S., British and French.

The following biographical information about Spadolini is drawn from the 1984-85 edition of Who's Who in the World:

SPADOLINI, GIOVANNI, history educator, former Italian prime minister; b. Florence, Italy, June 21, 1925; s. Guido and Leonella S.; Law degree U. Florence. Writer, *Il Messaggero*, Rome, 1947-50; polit. editor *Gazzetta del Popolo*, Turin, Italy, 1950-52, *Corriere della Sera*, 1955-68; editor *Resto del Carlino*, 1955-68, *Corriere della Sera*, 1968-72; prof. contemporary history U. Florence, 1950-; minister of environ., 1974-76, minister of edn., 1979, pres. Council of Ministers, 1981-82; prime minister. Sec., Republican party, 1979-; Decorated officer Legion of Honor; cavaliere di Gran Croce all'Ordine al Merito della Repubblica. Author: *Sorel, 1947: Il 1848 realtà e leggenda di una rivoluzione*, 1948; *Ritratto dell'Italia moderna*, 1949; *Lotta socialista Italia*, 1949; *Il Papato socialista*, 1950; *L'opposizione cattolica da Porta Pia al '98*, 1954; *Giolitti e i cattolici*, 1960; *I radicali dell'Ottocento*, 1962; *I repubblicani dopo l'Unità*, 1962; *Un dissidente del Risorgimento*, 1962; *Firenze Capitale*, 1967; *Il Tevere più largo*, 1967; *Il mondo di Giolitti*, 1967; *Storia Fiorentina. Carducci nella storia d'Italia: Il Mondo di Giolitti*, 1969; *Il 20 Settembre nella storia d'Italia*, 1971; *L'Italia della Ragione*, 1979; *L'Italia dei Laici*, 1980; *Autunno del Risorgimento: Senatore della Repubblica*. Office: care Partito Repubblica Italiano, Palazzo dei Caprettari 70, Rome, Italy*

Our schedule for Italy is as follows:

Monday, February 11: Early morning briefing with the Italian Jewish community

11:30 a.m. Meeting with Interior Minister Scalfaro

Monday, February 11: Requested afternoon briefing from the Israeli Embassy

Tuesday, February 12: Requested 9:30 a.m. meeting with Bill Barnes, Charge D'Affaires, U.S. Embassy, Holy See

11:30 a.m. Meeting with U.S. Ambassador Maxwell Rabb

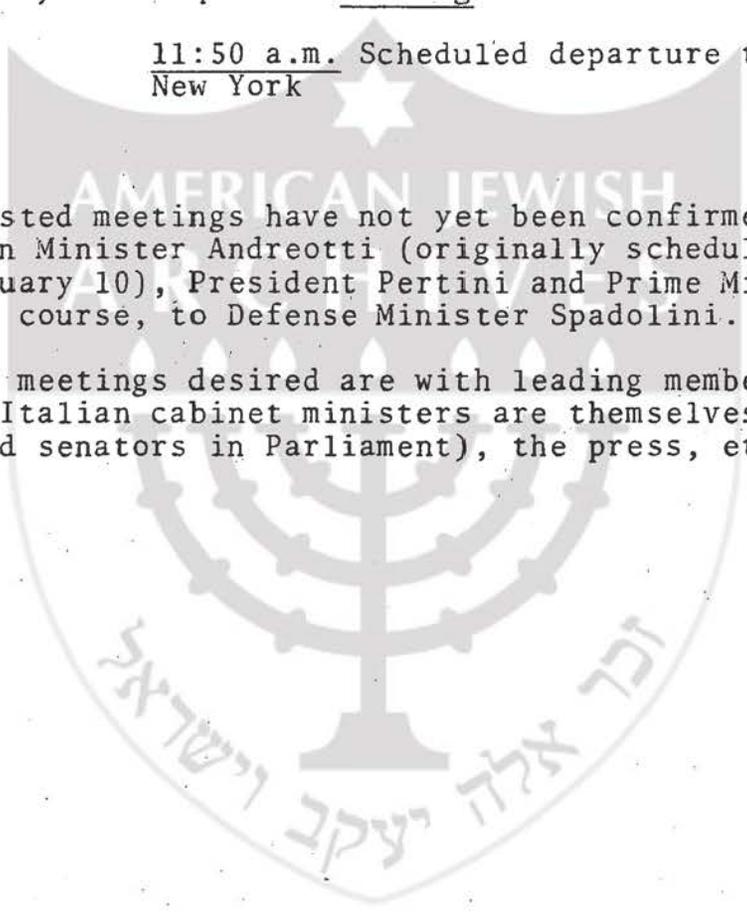
Wednesday, February 13: Late afternoon reception given by the Jewish community

Thursday, February 14: Requested morning audience with the Pope

11:50 a.m. Scheduled departure time for New York

Other requested meetings have not yet been confirmed. These include: Foreign Minister Andreotti (originally scheduled for the morning of February 10), President Pertini and Prime Minister Craxi, in addition, of course, to Defense Minister Spadolini.

Still other meetings desired are with leading members of Parliament (remember that Italian cabinet ministers are themselves drawn from the deputies and senators in Parliament), the press, etc.



DEC 4 1986

ITALY



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November 25, 1986

To: International Relations Dep't.

From Nives Fox

Subj: Congress Union of Italian Jewish Communities - Rome, Nov. 16-18

The AJC cable of congratulations sent on occasion of the Unione XII Congress in Rome was on the target, very appreciated, and the only message read in full by Tullia Zevi.

Highlights at the meeting were the two major problems troubling the community for some time: 1) Resuming and concluding the Intese negotiations (the accords between the government and the community); 2) assuring the financial independence of the community through some form of accepted taxation of its members; and state aid for Jewish schools.

The discussion concerning the Intese had been suspended as a result of the agreement reached between the Church authorities and Minister of Education Ms. Falcucci, part of the new Concordat, and which re-instated Catholic religious teaching in public schools. Albeit optional, this teaching allows the development of serious discrimination for those who do not avail themselves of it.

Agreements between the Union and the government had purposely been delayed by the community, which chose to be the last at the negotiating table because it wanted to have an idea of the results of the Concordat with the Catholics and the Intese with other minority religions -- Protestant, Methodist, Adventists, etc. -- before discussing its own.

During this period of waiting a development concerning the Unione financial autonomy also took place: the successful lawsuit against it by a Rome member, who charged that the taxes the community imposed (based on the Fascist law of 1930) were unconstitutional. The case ended with a Supreme Court decision in his favor. And these are all still unresolved matters which now must be settled rapidly.

The government representative in charge of the Intese talks is the Honorable Amato, Under-Secretary to the Council of Ministers and described as Craxi's right hand man. He addressed the Congress on the subject and replied to several questions. Speaking of the complexities involved in the concept of full equality as granted by the Constitution of the Republic, he said this must now be modified in a manner more suited to the times, namely, in recognition of rights to differences and specificities. Yet, he pointed out, there are limits to what a

/...

State can renounce in granting such differences, lest they impinge on the State's own prerogatives. Balancing the two equitably -- and he included a reference to some form of taxation by the Community of its members -- will not be an easy task, given the inherent contradictions faced. But Mr. Amato expressed his sympathy, goodwill and readiness for extended and frank dialogue in order to seek and reach satisfactory solutions.

The problem of Catholic teaching in the public schools remains a thorny one, much criticized by Jews and non-Jews as discriminatory, poorly planned and in need of revision. (Details about this issue are in my memorandum of February this year.) Though nothing has fundamentally changed, the putting into practice of this teaching brought on greater understanding about its faults. Supplying the "alternative hours" of valid courses for the students who do not avail themselves of religious teaching is not working at all, and not the least problem in this context are the costs involved. The ill-advised notion of including children aged three or four in catechism courses also has become more evidently wrong. Mr. Amato referred to it, recognizing that errors had been made and declaring that some must be remedied.

In the opting for or against religious teaching, many ~~parents~~ parents did not bother to write formal letters. This meant that their children were automatically scheduled for religion classes; and not just for a school year, but for an entire school cycle -- elementary, high-school. Most affected, however, are the minority religions, whose children are now in a state of limbo because of the virtually non-existent "alternative hour." As for the psychological and discriminatory effects, the case of a 12 year old in my family shows how the new system works. Since the parents refused to avail themselves of the religious teaching offered, the child is now the only one among 18 classes at her school who will not attend. This means that a teacher must be hired to give one child the "alternative" hour if the clause is to be implemented; and that ~~she~~ the child stands out in rather less than agreeable fashion from the rest, a single and solitary exception.

To what extent any of this can really be changed is not too clear at present. The outcry against the "little ones" is so general that something probably will be done. Note that Catholic teaching, as the State religion described in the Lateran Pacts, though part and parcel of the curriculum, began at age six, not in kindergarden. The government also says that the entire matter of religious teaching will be reviewed after a study of this first year's experience is completed. But anyone aware of the bureaucratic excellence of Italy can guess that the study, finding remedies and reaching another agreement could easily be stretched from a period of a couple of years to forever. Having left by the door and returned in ~~the~~ full force through the window, one can also be well assured that the Church will not easily give up what it has gained.

No smaller problem for the Jewish intese will be getting state aid for the Jewish schools where they exist and Jewish courses where needed; or devising some form of assured income for the community so that Jewish institutions and activities can be maintained. In fact, many reluctantly admit that the Fascist law of 1930 which permitted a community tax and granted those paying it an income tax exemption was fairly democratic, and certainly worked well for over 50 years. Only some variation of same will be a good solution for the Unione.

Finally, the opening ceremony of the Congress, which honored Nobel price winner Rita Levi Montalcino was very striking. Much pomp and circumstance in the beautiful Palazzo Barberini, with Italian President Francesco Cossiga facing the dais of Jewish leaders, in a large gilded armchair flanked by an array of ministers, senators, deputies and personalities. Tullia Zevi's speech was in her ~~usual~~ customary pointed and frank style, much applauded. Rita Levi Montalcino traced centuries of her own unusual and illustrious ancestors as a parallel of Italian history. All the press featured the "two women" at Palazzo Barberini. They were both quite beautiful and a pride for the community and friends. Not surprisingly Tullia was unanimously re-elected president of the Unione at the end of the Congress.

While in Rome I saw a rather good television program "Courage and Pity." The theme was Italian attitudes toward Jews during WWII -- people, government, army; with testimonies of foreign Jews helped by them and a discussion. The program was organized by Nicola Caracciolo, who had as consultants historians Renzo de Felice and Daniele Carpi. He and the historians, plus Chief Rabbi Toaff, Minister Andreotti and Tullia Zevi all participated in the discussion. Caracciolo also had a ~~book~~ book published of the testimonies: "Jews and Italy during the War - 1940-45." The subject seems to be very topical and I understand there will be a colloquy on it at Brooklyn College this coming December. The above television program was hooked up with the US, bringing Prof. Herzberg of the WJC and a Prof. Furio Colombo into the Rome discussion. Colombo used to be the US correspondent for La Stampa, and now teaches (nobody knew exactly but it was thought at Columbia University). I understand that he is organizing the December colloquy, and I would very much urge that someone at AJC try to attend. He impressed me as a very intelligent man, with sharp and knowledgeable analysis gifts.

It was he and Tullia who got to the heart of the matter during the discussion televised. Admitting the exceptional humanism of many at the time, they pointed out that nonetheless racial laws did pass, were applied; that they were accompanied by anti-Semitic propaganda that was not always disbelieved; and in the tragic end we know, Italy too had 7,000 Jews who did not return from the camps. For Colombo Italy was less guilty than others; but much work is left undone. He asked that the televised exchange be just the beginning of efforts toward greater awareness and understanding of what happened in the years of Nazism and Fascism, lest a repetition of the past take place.

~~Excerpt~~ And as further proof of how topical all this seems to be, after my return from Rome a call came from Joseph Rochlitz, sent by Irving Levine, who is also working on a documentary film about the role of the army and government toward Jews during Fascism. He knew about Caracciolo, the program, and Prof. Colombo; and also told me that AJC would be giving some help to his own documentary. At any rate, I hope you find Colombo and get him involved in whatever plans AJC has.

#####

cc: Tanenbaum
Harris
Geller