



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

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

Series G: Speaking Engagements. 1975-1992

Box 108, Folder 11, US Army Chaplains [Louisville, Ky.]. 15-16  
October 1979.

# SEVENTH ANNUAL TRADOC/FORSCOM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE



*"Energizing the Religious Ministry Team:  
The Power of Creative Tension."*

HOLIDAY CITY  
LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

15-19 OCTOBER 1979

## Tale of refugees brings tears

# Jewish leader tells plight of world's poor

By JOHN C. LONG

Courier-Journal Staff Writer

Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum is the national interreligious-affairs director of the American Jewish Committee.

He's a big shot.

When NBC needed guidance in producing its blockbuster "Holocaust" series last year, it called Rabbi Tannenbaum.

When President Carter needed the advice of a Jewish leader for his "crisis of confidence" address last summer, it was Rabbi Tannenbaum he called to Camp David.

How to involve Jews in the U.S. visit of Pope John Paul II? Call Rabbi Tannenbaum.

And it was Rabbi Tannenbaum whom the Kentuckiana Interfaith Community — the Louisville area's new coalition of Protestant, Catholic, Orthodox and Jewish groups — asked to speak in Louisville yesterday.

It wasn't tales of NBC or Jimmy Carter or the pope that left an impression on Tannenbaum's audience of 50 people at Masterson's restaurant yesterday.

It was the stories he told of a Roman Catholic high school teacher in Saigon named Nguen Tan, and of the boatload of Vietnamese refugees who drowned before his eyes on a Malaysian beach 10 months ago.

He called the stories "modern parables." They brought tears to the eyes of many. When Tannenbaum had finished, the audience sat stunned and silent until the initial pain of the rabbi's words had passed.

Tannenbaum saw Tan in Jakarta, Indonesia, in February 1978 while on a fact-finding mission to Southeast Asia with 13 other prominent Americans. Tan, his wife, two brothers, their wives and all their children were aboard a battered skiff in the harbor.

Tan told Tannenbaum the family fled Vietnam on the boat after the government told them they would be sent for "economic re-education" as indentured workers on a collective farm. He told the rabbi this is what happened:

They packed all they could, hiked through the forest for two days and sailed for four weeks on the South China Sea. By the third week they had run out of food and water. They drank seawater and ate seaweed. The children got raging fevers and screamed with pain day and night. Twenty-three cargo ships passed by their skiff.

"We waved at them with whatever cloth we had," the rabbi quoted Tan as saying. "We no longer wanted to be picked up. All we wanted was a little water or a piece of bread. Not one

stopped." Some did slow down. The crewmen looked down at the refugees and laughed at them.

"Rabbi, I now understand for the first time in my life what it must have been like to be a Jew in Nazi Germany in the 1930s."

Tannenbaum said he flashed back to 1939, and another boat named the St. Louis — the last boat to leave Hamburg with more than 900 Jewish refugees.

The boat sailed to America, but no country in North or South America — not even the United States — would accept the refugees. The St. Louis returned to Europe, and many of the refugees were killed by the Nazis, Tannenbaum said.

When the fact-finding group, which also included Protestants and Catholics, returned to the United States, they went to the White House and convinced Carter he should send the 7th Fleet to aid the refugees. "This group of Christians and Jews literally changed the foreign policy of the United States," he said.

Later, he said, a group of a half-dozen Protestants, Catholics and Jews went to Capitol Hill and got Congress to reverse itself on providing food to starving people overseas.

"Nobody else was there. Not the university people, not labor, not big busi-

ness." The Judeo-Christian tradition, he said, is "a community of conscience," and "because of groups such as this, what binds us together is greater than our differences."

Last December Tannenbaum was back in Southeast Asia, standing with a United Nations official on a beach in a fishing village in Malaysia's Trengannu Province.

A boat with about 350 Vietnamese refugees landed on the beach after a long and difficult voyage. Before the refugees could get off the boat, the villagers, who were Muslim, ran to the beach, shouting, "Infidels! Infidels!" They pushed the boat back into the sea. It capsized. All but about 50 drowned. Tannenbaum managed to pull one elderly woman out of the water, but he saw many others, including babies and children, sink beneath the sea. "Well, Rabbi," said the U.N. official, "this is the third one this week."

To see people destroying other people "in the name of God" makes one realize that the greatest gift America can give to the world is to respect one another's differences and work for the common welfare, Tannenbaum said.

"Committed Christians and Jews" need "to undertake the redemption of the world while there is still time."

*magfader 10/15*

August 30, 1979

Chaplain Henry F. Ackerman, (LTC) USA  
Assistant Chaplain for  
Army Wide Ministries  
Department of the Army  
Fort Monroe, Virginia 23651

Dear Chaplain Ackerman,

Thank you very much for your warm and thoughtful letter of August 22nd.

The conception of the Ecumenical Worship Service is a most appealing one and I look forward to being with you on Monday afternoon, October 15th.

I will plan to stay with you through October 16, but then as I indicated earlier will find it necessary to return to New York in order to prepare for a trip to Germany where we will be holding a joint meeting with the Vatican Secretariat on Catholic-Jewish Relations.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of our latest mailing to Christian and Jewish leaders. Perhaps you may wish to circulate some of this material to the participants in the conference as some background regarding the critical moral and human issues that I believe Christians and Jews should be facing together.

With warmest personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum  
National Director  
Interreligious Affairs

MHT:RPR

Enclosures



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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY TRAINING AND DOCTRINE COMMAND  
FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA 23651

on tape  
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22 August 1979

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

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

We are looking forward to your participation in our conference on Monday evening, 15 October and Tuesday morning, 16 October.

Registration will be held Monday afternoon, 15 October. Our opening session will begin at 7:00 PM. Our Ecumenical Worship Service, at which you will be the speaker, will begin at 8:00 PM and will last for an hour. The Jewish Community Center Orchestra of Louisville, KY, a 16 piece ensemble, will provide music during the worship service. A tentative agenda of events is inclosed. As soon as we have a copy of our ecumenical worship service bulletin we will send you one.

The theme of the conference is "Energizing the Religious Ministry Team: The Power of Creative Tension." As was stressed in our 26 December 1978 letter to you, we are exploring a theme which deals with the power of prophetic ministry. As religious people, we are on the periphery, in creative tension with the rest of the world. We believe that this gives us a powerful point of view that the military needs to hear. We need to be challenged, to be able to rejoice in the power and perspective that is ours, and to be creative and sensitive in communicating that power.

On Tuesday morning, 16 October, William H. Zierdt, a retired lieutenant colonel, now with the Center For Exploration of Values, Indianapolis, IN, will address the theme of creative tension. He will focus on the responsibility of the Religious Ministry Team to develop links with the rest of the Army, so that we can better communicate our perspective to them. Following his talk, we will break into small groups of 10 persons each

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

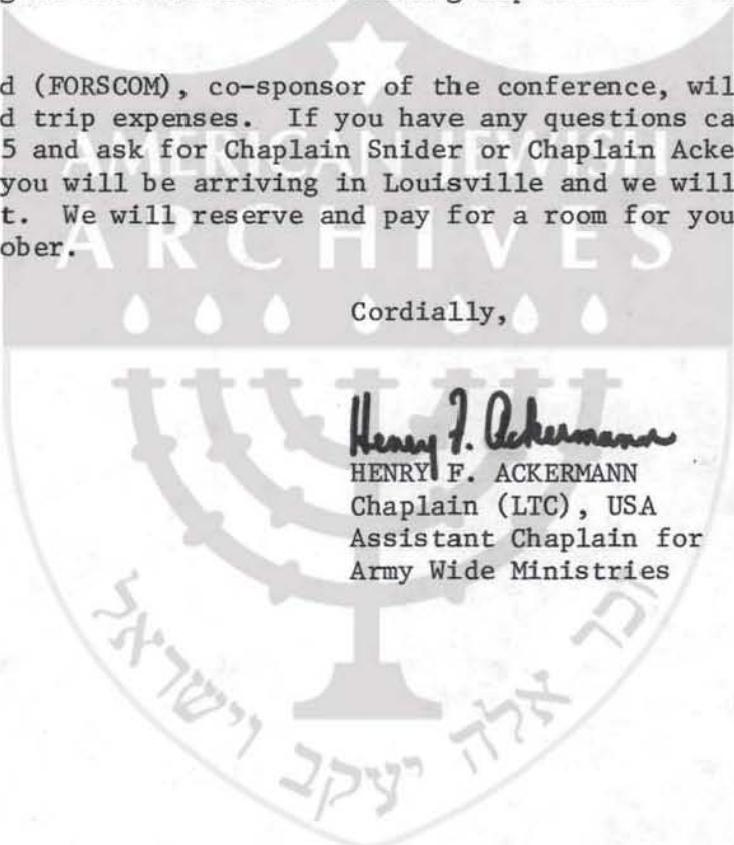
22 August 1979

to discuss this theme. We will then return for a plenary session with you, Colonel Zierdt and Chaplain (MG) Kermit D. Johnson, Chief of Chaplains. You will have five minutes to make a statement, Chaplain Johnson will make a five-minute statement and then there will be time for questions. The session should end by 11:30.

If you would like to meet some of the small group leaders, you are invited to arrive Monday afternoon, 15 October. Colonel Zierdt will hold a meeting at 2:00 PM with the small group leaders to discuss the theme.

Forces Command (FORSCOM), co-sponsor of the conference, will provide your honorarium and trip expenses. If you have any questions call this office, (804) 727-4485 and ask for Chaplain Snider or Chaplain Ackermann. Let us know when you will be arriving in Louisville and we will pick you up at the airport. We will reserve and pay for a room for you for Monday night, 15 October.

Cordially,

  
Henry F. Ackermann  
HENRY F. ACKERMANN  
Chaplain (LTC), USA  
Assistant Chaplain for  
Army Wide Ministries

1 Inclosure  
as stated

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HENRY F. ACKERMANN  
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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES ARMY TRAINING AND DOCTRINE COMMAND  
FORT MONROE, VIRGINIA 23651

ATCH

26 December 1978

F - Oct. 16, '79

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

Dear Rabbi Tanenbaum:

The chaplains of the two largest Army commands in the United States are hosting a major professional development conference at Holiday City, Louisville, KY, 15-18 October 1979. Approximately 250 Army chaplains, directors of religious education and chapel activities specialists will be present from the Continental United States, Puerto Rico, Panama, Hawaii and Alaska. We are exploring a theme which deals with the power of prophetic ministry. Our basic thrust is that as religious people we live on the periphery of society, and therefore in creative tension with the rest of the world. As marginal people we have a powerful perspective to offer that our military world needs to hear. Your own life is a demonstration of that power, so I know you will have no trouble speaking to the theme. Our conference will include worship, learning modules and task groups which will focus on the theme.

Our objective for the conference is to empower the Religious Ministry Team (chaplains, chapel activities specialists and directors of religious education) to engage in "cutting edge" type ministries. We want to explore and affirm the spiritual distinctiveness of the Religious Ministry Team amidst secular diversity.

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I invite you to be the speaker for an Ecumenical Worship Service to be held on Thursday, 18 October 1979. We will provide more details at a later date.

We will provide you an honorarium and trip expenses. I would appreciate your suggestions for an honorarium.

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum

26 December 1978

I eagerly await your reply and sincerely hope you will be with us in October.

Cordially,

Keith Gedell

ALBERT F. LEDEBUHR  
Chaplain (Colonel), USA  
Chaplain



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