



# NEWS

FILE  
COPY

DATE: May 7, 1992

FROM: Fr. Kenneth J. Doyle  
O 202-541-3200  
H 202-832-1520

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## CATHOLIC, JEWISH LEADERS PLEDGE FURTHER DIALOGUE, COOPERATION

BALTIMORE--A group of leading Catholic and Jewish officials and scholars today recommended that leaders of the two religions meet annually in every country for "mutual reflection on the goals and possibilities of the dialogue and cooperation between Jews and Catholics."

They urged, too, that differences between the two religious bodies be addressed "in quiet and constructive dialogue rather than fractious accusations."

The message came in a joint statement released at the end of a three-day meeting in Baltimore of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee.

Though the Committee has met 14 times since its inception in 1970, this was the first meeting of the group to take place in the United States.

The Catholic representation of some 25 Church officials and scholars was led by Cardinal Edward Cassidy, President of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with Jews. A similar-sized Jewish delegation was led by Edgar M. Bronfman, chairman of the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC is composed of the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League/B'nai B'rith International, the Jewish Council for Interreligious Consultations in Israel, the Synagogue Council for America and the World Jewish Congress.)

The joint statement highlighted the progress that has been made in Catholic-Jewish understanding -- noting, for example, a

OFFICE FOR MEDIA RELATIONS  
UNITED STATES CATHOLIC CONFERENCE  
3211 4th STREET, N.E. • WASHINGTON, D.C. 20017-1194

more...

statement on anti-Semitism by Catholic bishops of Poland read in each church in the country in January of 1991.

The statement pledged the two groups to greater efforts to "counteract new manifestations of anti-Semitism of any kind, such as we see emerging throughout East and West Europe in particular."

It noted historical manifestations of anti-Semitism, such as the expulsion of Jews (and Muslims) from Spain in 1492, but highlighted recent statements by top Catholic Church officials during this 500th anniversary year voicing repentance for this "tragic act of intolerance."

The statement voiced the hope that "significant progress...will soon be achieved" in the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the Vatican and the State of Israel.

During the meeting, several rectors and deans of Catholic and Jewish institutions of higher learning met to seek possibilities for promoting deeper understanding between Catholics and Jews on the academic level.

The meeting was held at St. Mary's Seminary and University, the oldest seminary in the United States, and was hosted by Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, the U.S. Catholic bishops' representative for Catholic-Jewish relations.

The United States has the world's largest Jewish community, and the bishops of the U.S. were the first local body of bishops in the world to establish formal Catholic-Jewish dialogue after the Second Vatican Council.

The dialogue grew out of the Council's decree Nostra Aetate, which highlighted the common spiritual heritage of Christians and Jews and urged joint theological inquiry and discussion.

In delivering one of the keynote addresses on May 4, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago traced the history of Jewish-Catholic cooperation in issues of public policy since the days when they were linked as victims of discrimination by signs

more...

which said "Neither Catholics nor Jews need apply." He urged the revival of Christian and Jewish moral leadership in addressing issues of global justice lest the world be confronted again with the rejection of God as the ultimate source of life, which produced Naziism and the Holocaust. Among the global justice issues, he highlighted the ecological crisis, in which "we may now be pushing the natural world to its recuperative limits, and even beyond, through pollution and other forms of environmental destruction."

Building on a recommendation made at the group's last meeting in Prague in 1990, Cardinal Bernardin suggested that Vatican archives relating to World War II, the Holocaust and its aftermath be available to scholars.

Dr. Joseph Burg of Israel, in the other keynote address, spoke of the need to acknowledge the validity of religious pluralism "beyond tolerance" to equality. Dr. Burg is the President of the Memorial Authority of Israel and former minister of religious affairs of the government of Israel.

At a press conference closing the Baltimore meeting, Archbishop Keeler noted that this was the first meeting of the Liaison Committee at which the closing communique was a joint statement of both groups, rather than simply an account of the observations of each of the two delegations.

At that same press conference, Rabbi James Rudin called Catholic-Jewish dialogue "one of the great success stories of the 20th century." Rabbi Rudin is direction of Interreligious Affairs for the American Jewish Committee and former chairman of IJCIC.

more...

The full text of the joint statement follows.

For further background on the meeting and the statement,  
please contact:

Dr. Eugene Fisher  
Director for Jewish-Catholic Relations,  
United States Catholic Conference  
(W) 202-541-3020 (H) 703-476-4579

and

Rabbi A. James Rudin  
Director, Interreligious Affairs,  
American Jewish Committee  
(W) 212-751-4000 (H) 212-249-595

# # #

92-048  
A,ISR

Statement  
by the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee

Baltimore, May 7, 1992  
Yom Ha Atzmauth, 5752

Representing the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, IJCIC; American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith/Anti-Defamation League, Israel Jewish Committee for Interreligious Relations, Synagogue Council of America, World Jewish Congress.

Meeting for the first time in the Western Hemisphere, representatives of the IJCIC and the Holy See's Commission met in Baltimore, Maryland, on May 4-7, 1992. This was the 14th meeting of the International Catholic-Jewish Liaison Committee (ILC). The co-chairs of the ILC are Mr. Edgar Bronfman, President of the World Jewish Congress, and Edward Cardinal Cassidy of the Holy See. A list of all participants is appended. The meeting was hosted at St. Mary's Seminary and University by Archbishop William H. Keeler of the Archdiocese of Baltimore.

This meeting built upon the successful conference of the last session held in Prague on September 3-6, 1990, which jointly "condemned anti-Semitism as well as all forms of racism as a sin against God and humanity, and affirmed that we (Catholics) cannot be authentically Christian and engage in anti-Semitism."

In continuation of that theme, before deliberations of the Conference began, the Catholic and Jewish delegations were received in the offices of the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D. C., and were given a detailed orientation of the

institution nearing completion in the nation's capital.

The formal opening of the meeting took place in public session at St. Mary's with a welcome by Archbishop William Keeler of Baltimore, who noted the tradition of religious pluralism in the Americas and of religious liberty, especially in Maryland, established precisely for this purpose.

The opening statements by the ILC co-chairs, Mr. Bronfman and Cardinal Cassidy, both stressed that this meeting was to be understood as a continuation and intensification of the historic ILC meeting in Prague in September 1990. Since Prague, the delegates recognized both progress made and the opening up of future opportunities and challenges.

Recalling that 1992 marks the 500th anniversary of the expulsion from Spain of the Jews (an act extended to Muslims as well), the Conference welcomed the recognition by Cardinal Cassidy that teshuvah (repentance) was the appropriate response of the Catholic Church to this tragic act of intolerance. The Cardinal made his own the statement of repentance expressed by Archbishop Ramon Torella in the presence of Cardinal Marcelo González Martín, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, to a delegation of the Central Conference of American Rabbis on March 26, 1992:

"1492 was a time for persecution, rejection, eviction, dispossession, forced conversion, exile and even death...1492, and many other dates before and after, introduced a wedge between our two peoples. A wall was built, in a sense stronger and more impervious than the

Iron Curtain fallen to pieces not so long ago... 1992 should be a year of teshuvah...but also, at the same time, a year of joy. Teshuvah, in fact, does not destroy but liberates, thanks to the Lord's mercy and our brothers' disposition for reconciliation."

Particularly important since the Prague meeting has been the unanimous statement on Catholic-Jewish relations of the Polish bishops, which was proclaimed from the pulpit at every Mass in every parish throughout Poland on January 20, 1991. Also of importance in the period since the Prague meeting have been the visits of Pope John Paul II to Hungary, Poland and the Czech and Slovak Federated Republics, his meetings with Jewish communities and significant statements on those occasions, and his public affirmations of and reflections on the Prague statement itself, as for example in Rome on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of Nostra Aetate. These statements of the Pope have highlighted the importance of the Prague agreement, as has also the fact that the historic European Synod of Bishops took up the theme of the work of the ILC and devoted a major section of its final declaration to the issue.

The Conference received very positive reports from the visit of the ILC delegation to Poland, Hungary and the Czech and Slovak Federated Republics in February 1992. During the visit to Auschwitz, the delegation saw the concrete progress that has been made on building the new Convent and Study Center, and was assured by local authorities that every sincere effort to complete the

Convent by the end of this year would be made and achieve a mutually satisfactory resolution of this painful issue. The delegation was accorded all possible hospitality and cooperation by Catholic and Jewish leaders in all the countries it visited, leaving with a feeling that the promise of Prague was beginning to bear fruit. The discussions of the 14th Meeting, however, also uncovered further challenges, such as new manifestations of anti-Semitism developing in Europe and the need to create a climate in which problems may be jointly faced.

These new challenges underscore the urgent need to intensify our cooperation. In this way we, especially in education and in formation (the preparation of those who are to be the teachers and leaders of our religious communities), counteract new manifestations of anti-Semitism and racism of any kind, such as we see emerging throughout East and West Europe in particular. We see the necessity of working together to uphold the rights of all minorities, and to fight sexual and economic exploitation of women and children. To create such a climate of cooperation, the role of our Steering Committee must be strengthened to become a more effective instrument to respond to and, indeed, anticipate a variety of challenges. For this, the Steering Committee will henceforth meet at least twice a year.

These joint efforts need to be linked to more collaborative engagements in our ongoing efforts within existing international organizations such as the United Nations on the world level, and the Organization of American States, and European and other



intergovernmental institutions on the regional level, and among Non-Governmental Organizations in general. Of particular urgency are joint commitments to democratic principles and opposition to extreme nationalistic movements which threaten democracy. This, the Catholic side noted, was also a major theme and concern of the recent special meeting for Europe of the Synod of Bishops.

The ILC noted during its Baltimore meeting the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the mass deportations of Jews to the death camps in World War II. Deepening the reflections on the Shoah begun in Prague, Rev. Bernard Dupuy, O.P., of Paris presented a profound Christian reflection on the Shoah and on the sacred task of tikkun olam ("mending the world") after that unique horror. These reflections and the equally moving responses to them are part of the process of dialogue that will lead to the development by the Holy See's Commission of a statement on the Shoah and anti-Semitism addressed to the whole Catholic Church.

In his major address to the group during the public session Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago traced the distinctive history of Catholic-Jewish relations in the United States, in which Jews and Catholics side by side fought discrimination against their own communities and then discrimination against African-Americans during the civil rights movement. He concluded with a number of salient topics for the social agenda of the ILC and Catholic-Jewish dialogue on the local level.

One such topic, while needing further consideration by appropriate authorities of the Holy See, deserves mention in the

spirit of candor and frankness of the meeting itself. It was the Cardinal Bernardin's suggestion that the periods of the Vatican archives relating to World War II and the Holocaust and its immediate aftermath be made available to serious scholars on a case by case basis, in exception to the normal procedure.

Dr. Joseph Burg of Israel spoke eloquently on the nature of and need to acknowledge the validity of religious pluralism "beyond tolerance" to equality. Tuesday, May 5, began with the reading of a Psalm and a prayerful remembrance by Msgr. Pier Francesco Fumagalli of several of our members and friends who have died since the Prague meeting. These were: Dr. Desider Galsky, President of the Council of Jewish Communities of Bohemia and Moravia; Bishop Pietro Rossano, Auxiliary Bishop of Rome; Bishop Francis Mugavero, Bishop of Brooklyn; Mrs. Caroline Feldman, wife of Dr. Leon Feldman; Bishop Gerald Mahon, Auxiliary Bishop of Westminster; and Mr. Fritz Becker, representative of the World Jewish Congress in Rome.

May their memory be blessed, and for us an inspiration as we continue our work.

This session was marked by a series of reports on the situation of Christian-Jewish relations in several countries and regions. Professor Israel Guttman of Israel, Mr. Jerzy Turowicz and Bishop Stanislaw Gadecki of Poland reported on historical and contemporary developments in Poland (Mr. Turowicz' paper was read in absentia by Brother William Martyn, S.A., of New York). Mr. Jean Kahn, President of the European Jewish Congress, reported on the

rise of intolerance, xenophobia, and anti-Semitism in various forms throughout Western Europe.

Rabbi Henry Sobel of São Paulo, Brazil, reported that despite the recent bombing of the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, anti-Semitism in Latin America today appears to be neither institutionalized nor politically viable, but merely sporadic and isolated. Textbook and seminary programs, episcopal statements on Passion Plays and even TV appearances are helping to popularize the dialogue in Latin America.

The afternoon session again saw challenging and provocative presentations on the potential for joint social action by Msgr. George G. Higgins of Washington, D.C., and on human rights by Dr. Gerhart Riegner of Geneva. There followed interventions on environmental issues by Msgr. Diarmuid Martin of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, on the equitable allocation of health care resources by Rabbi A. James Rudin of New York and on other social ethical issues by Rabbi David Rosen and Dr. Geoffrey Wigoder of Israel.

The evening of May 5 was highlighted by a reception held at St. Mary's Seminary and University. Welcoming the guests and members were Archbishop Keeler, the host, and Mayor Kurt Schmoke of Baltimore. Mr. Bronfman and Cardinal Cassidy, as co-chairs, gave brief appreciations, as did Rabbi Jerome Davidson, President of the Synagogue Council of America.

The Wednesday sessions on education, and specifically the teachings regarding each other in our respective educational texts

and curricula, were chaired by Rabbi Mordecai Waxman and Dr. Eugene J. Fisher. Rev. Remi Hoeckman, O.P., speaking on behalf of the Holy See's Congregation for Catholic Education, gave strong support for future programs aimed at eliminating anti-Judaism in Christian education.

Ms. Judith Banki of the American Jewish Committee and Rabbi Leon Klenicki of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith traced the classic "teaching of contempt" in Catholic teaching and preaching, the substantial progress made in recent years, and the unresolved difficulties that remain.

In conjunction with the plenary that afternoon, a number of rectors, deans and representatives of Catholic and Jewish institutions of higher learning met to seek possibilities for promoting deeper understanding between Catholics and Jews on the academic level.

On the evening of May 6, prayers and dinner were hosted by Rabbi Joel Zaiman, past president of the Synagogue Council of America, at Congregation Chizuk Amuno.

In conclusion, the ILC asks that national bishops' conferences and corresponding Jewish communities devote one occasion each year to mutual reflection on the goals and possibilities of the dialogue between Jews and Catholics. The ILC promises to help provide and recommend suitable study aids for these annual reflections.

In the context of the day on which Jews celebrate Yom Ha Atzmuth (Israel's Independence Day, May 7), while recognizing that the question of diplomatic relations between the State of Israel

and the Holy See is a matter of competence first and foremost for the Government of the State of Israel and the Vatican Secretariat of State, the Conference participants are conscious of the importance of this question also for Jewish-Catholic relations in general and express hope that significant progress in this regard will soon be achieved.

The members of the ILC are one in their hope that this meeting, which broke new ground in so many areas and considered still further challenges, may have contributed its part to the building of a new world. This would be a world in which the problems which have plagued the past will be considered to be abnormal rather than normal, in which differences are addressed in quiet and constructive dialogue rather than fractious accusations, in which there is an ever-expanding basis for hope despite the evil that threatens our ancient faiths.