

# HISTORIC CATHOLIC-JEWISH MEETING COMBATS ANTI-SEMITISM

The fifth annual meeting of the International Catholic - Jewish Liaison Committee ended three days of talks in Jerusalem, Israel on March 3rd by unanimously expressing its "profound concern over the campaign to defame the State of Israel and the Jewish people and isolate them from the international community."

A statement issued in Jerusalem by a group comprised of 12 Catholics representing the Vatican and 17 Jews representing five Jewish organizations, noted "with satisfaction the repudiation by various authorities of the Catholic Church of the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations equating Zionism with racism."

It was the fifth meeting of the Liaison Committee and the first to be held in Jerusalem. The special significance attached to the fact that the Vatican agreed to the meeting in the Holy City was reflected in the closing statement signed by all participants expressing "deep joy over the historical and religious significance of the fact that the meeting took place for the first time in the holy city of Jerusalem."

The main focus of the consultation was a Jewish and Catholic assessment of major developments in Catholic - Jewish relations since the issuance of the Second Vatican Declaration (Nostra Aetate) in 1965.

Rabbi Henry Siegman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, in a paper expressing his personal views charted the progress represented by the Vatican Guidelines issued in January, 1975, ten years after Nostra Aetate. The Guidelines are the first official document to call for the study of Judaism and an understanding of the Jewish faith in light of Judaism's own self-understanding.

According to Rabbi Siegman, before a serious dialogue between Catholics and Jews can take place, the Catholic Church must first come to terms with its own responsibility for anti-Semitism.

"Despite the problem of anti-Semitism" said Rabbi Siegman, the Guidelines represent a major advance over Nostra Aetate, because they are the first Catholic document on the highest level of authority which "view Judaism as a rich and vital religious movement and seeks a living link with it. The Vatican Guidelines reflect a new reality; the relations of the Catholic Church and the Jewish people -- for all of their remaining complexity and potential for conflict -- have changed fundamentally. We perceive one another and are able to talk to one another in ways that were utterly inconceivable only a generation ago."

The Catholic - Jewish Liaison Committee is

composed of representatives of the Roman Catholic Church and of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. The Jewish committee, chaired by Rabbi Joseph H. Lookstein, President of the Synagogue Council of America, is comprised of the Synagogue Council of America, World Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, B'nai B'rith Anti - Defamation League and the Israel Council on Inter-religious Consultations.

## VORSTER'S VISIT TO ISRAEL "NOT OFFICIAL"

JERUSALEM (WNS) -- South African Prime Minister John Vorster has come to Israel accompanied by his wife and his Foreign Minister, Hilgarde Muller.

He said that his country's "relations with Israel have never been so good." Although Vorster has met with Premier Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon and Defense Minister Shimon Peres, Israeli officials have not labeled the visit as "official" or even "semi-official." This reflects the sensitivity here over playing host to the leader of an apartheid regime which has been condemned by much of the world.

At the same time, relations between Israel and South Africa have improved greatly since the Yom Kippur War and it is noted that Israel has strong ties to the Jewish community of 120,000 in South Africa. Israeli officials have refused comments

on reports from Pretoria that Vorster is interested in buying Israeli-made arms or that he will solicit Israeli support for an "anti - Communist front" in Southern Africa.

There have been unusually tight security arrangements as Vorster visited Yad Vashem, the Western Wall, Christian sites in Jerusalem and Bethlehem and toured the Galilee, the Golan Heights and the Sinai. He also visited the Israel Aircraft Industries plant.

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## Bar Mitzvah Speech

By Rabbi Samuel Silver

Have you ever met a Jewish scholar who has virtually committed the Talmud to memory? It is an amazing feat, and quite a number of people can do it.

One of them is the rabbi of Congregation Bnai Torah, Highland Park, Ill. His name is (Dr.) Sholom Singer. He and his wife were recently honored on their Chai (eighteenth) anniversary with the congregation.

Dr. Singer writes learned tomes but I mention him today because he inspired one of the finest Bar Mitzvah talks I've ever read. It's hard to believe that 13-year old Steven Klauber could have written the talk which goes, in part, like this:

"One of the most apparent concepts in the Jewish faith is that He is a personal God, not in the sense that He has a body, but that He deals with man at will, through justice, anger and love. He is a God of hope, for the world which he created with a purpose is not an illusion, and history is not an endless cycle..."

"When you reach the Bar Mitzvah age it becomes time to reflect upon your life: the meaning of being Jewish .... A Jew believes that God is one, so as God is one, so is life. Every part of it must be sanctified. There is no division between the evil represented by body and the good represented by soul, for both must serve God. These concepts to me mean that I should be faithful to my religion, family and country. I wouldn't lie, steal or cheat. I would follow the commandments and obey my parents. I would help keep Israel alive and well..."

"I would like to thank our rabbi, my teacher, and my parents for the 13 years they've put up with me, my relatives for happy times I've had with them and my friends for being friends." What nachas those parents must have had!

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