

## Vatican, Jews join against 'demonic' enemy

by Vivian Freyre Zoakos

The Sept. 1 meeting between Pope John Paul II and the leaders of the international Jewish community established the foundations of an historic alliance. Broadly speaking, the purpose of the alliance was defined as the waging of a common battle against evil. More narrowly, that organized evil today was jointly agreed to reside in the Soviet Union and its allies.

This conclusion to the talks represented a dramatic overturn of a scenario put into place by well-established Soviet assets. These included, principally, the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) of the U.S. Justice Department, and whisky king Edgar Bronfman, head of the World Jewish Congress.

The origins of the Sept. 1 meeting lie in an OSI attempt to destabilize Austria, and later in Bronfman's attempt to discredit the Pope when the latter stepped in to reverse the OSI's operation. The OSI had acted as the conduit for a piece of Soviet-authored disinformation that characterized Austrian President Kurt Waldheim as an ex-Nazi. This set into motion Austria's international isolation, reversed only when John Paul II demonstratively received Waldheim in audience at the Vatican, addressing some warm words of praise to both Waldheim and the overwhelmingly Catholic Austrian people.

Then Bronfman stepped in. In what no doubt appeared to his Soviet masters as a brilliant piece of maneuvering, Bronfman thought to snatch victory from defeat by using the Pope's meeting with Waldheim to discredit what in Moscow's correct estimation is a much more important target: the papacy itself. Bronfman mounted a massive campaign to sever Judeo-Vatican relations, beginning with a boycott of a scheduled Sept. 11 meeting in Miami between the Pope and the principal Jewish leaders.

What followed was a lengthy debate inside the international Jewish community. This ended with the defeat of Bronfman's forces of the World Jewish Congress, a decision which already paved the way for the alliance later forged with the Pope, even before the Jewish leaders stepped inside the Vatican walls.

Led by Rabbi Mordecai Waxman, chairman of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations, these Jewish leaders knew precisely what political entity they were opposing when they rejected Bronfman's Soviet-dictated line. Although unwilling to say it publicly, privately Jewish leaders admitted their knowledge that Bronfman's attempt to derail Judeo-Catholic relations, together with personally discrediting the Pope, was part of an operation conceived in Moscow.

But the decision to go against the Moscow line on the Pope question took place against a definite strategic backdrop. On Aug. 30, the day before the first of various meetings in the Vatican with the Jewish representatives, the Israeli cabinet dealt a death blow to the entire operation put in place by Ariel Sharon, the purpose of which had been to shift the balance of Israeli alliance from the United States to the Soviet Union.

This happened when the cabinet voted 12 to 11 to kill the Lavi airplane project, and instead retool the Israeli aeronautics industry to function as an extension of the American one (story, page 44). Israel will now participate, among other projects, in the production of the current American F-16 fighter plane, and the development and production of the next generation of the F-16. Predictably, Sharon screamed loudly and publicly. As the *EIR* had documented in a special report written as far back 1981, Sharon had planned development of the Lavi fighter plane to be the centerpiece of a policy that

would make Israel the center of a Soviet-allied Middle East power complex.

## Historic meeting

If viewed against this backdrop, it is easy to read between the lines of diplomatese to understand precisely what occurred in the Aug. 31-Sept. 1 Judeo-Vatican consultations.

The meetings resulted in numerous breakthroughs. Among these were:

1) The characterization, in the final communiqué, of Nazi ideology as being “not only anti-Semitic but also profoundly *demonic* and *anti-Christian*.” (Emphasis added).

The characterization of Nazism as “demonic” identifies it as a manifestation of evil in the world, rather than an isolated, unique, aberration. This shifts the emphasis to the recognition of evil as such, and implicitly the recognition that evil is capable of multiple manifestations. The characterization of Nazism as anti-Christian, alongside being anti-Semitic, joins the two great faiths in fighting against this evil. It was especially important, in this context, that the communiqué ends with a statement of the Pope’s conviction that evil “can be overcome.”

It was not insignificant that this language, common to John Paul II but previously unused by Jews, showed up in personal interviews with the rabbis who participated in the meetings with the Pope and other Vatican officials. Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum, the director of international relations for the American Jewish Committee, spoke of the Nazi period as a “demonic chapter,” when he was interviewed Sept. 1 by NBC’s “Today Show.”

2) The Jewish promise, on behalf of international mainstream Judaism, to oppose anti-Catholicism “wherever” it arises. The text of the final communiqué reads: “The Jewish delegation declared its strong opposition to any and all anti-Catholic manifestations and pledged itself to join with Catholics in opposing them.”

It does not take great imagination to read this as a clear reference to the Soviet Union and its satellites. It is in the U.S.S.R. and Poland where by far the most celebrated anti-Catholic repression is ongoing today.

3) The creation, in the words of Rabbi Tannenbaum, of “a whole new structure to keep the Vatican in touch with trends and developments in the world Jewish community. . . .”

The agreement to build this structure, to institutionally cement ongoing Judeo-Catholic collaboration, was supplemented by the Vatican’s promise to issue a document, possibly even a papal encyclical (according to Rabbi Gilbert Klaperman, president of the Synagogue Council of America) on the issue of the holocaust. More broadly, the document will comprise a study of the history of anti-Semitism, including within the Catholic Church itself. This will cement Judeo-Catholic relations in a decisive, indissoluble way.

Taken all together, the decisions taken at the Vatican

meetings spell out the foundations for a politico-philosophical alliance both in the broad sense, but also specifically against the leading manifestation of organized evil today: the Soviet empire.

On the question of Israel, although the Vatican did not suddenly announce its diplomatic recognition of that country, an important step forward was taken when the Pope told the rabbis, as the final communiqué reiterates, that “there exist no theological reasons in Catholic doctrine that would inhibit such relations.”

## A unique dialogue

Among the things that most impressed the rabbis was that, for the first time in long memory, a Pope met with Jewish representatives in actual dialogue. Unlike earlier audiences with past Popes, who limited themselves to reading a formal prepared statement, Pope John Paul II participated in a free discussion with the Jewish leaders. The result, coupled with the concrete agreements reached, was what Rabbi Klaperman characterized as “a beautiful experience.”

“He greeted us all by saying, ‘We are brothers.’ And that, in fact, set the tone for the entire meeting, which was very warm. . . . It was not an audience. This was a round table discussion. We each spoke. The Pope listened very intently to what everybody said. He said he was not prepared to answer all the questions at this time, and that he might answer them in the future. But in fact, I noticed, and we all felt, that he was making very copious mental notes of everything that was being said.”

## The ‘marginal’ Bronfman

The success of the Vatican meetings have not, of course, put a stop to Soviet-inspired operations. If anything, Moscow now must step up operations for the unenviable task of trying to break the burgeoning Judeo-Catholic alliance. Hence, institutions such as the Wiesenthal Center have taken out advertisements in the *International Herald Tribune*, attacking the Pope for failing to announce instant diplomatic recognition of Israel. Bronfman’s World Jewish Congress hysterically denounces the Jewish leaders who met with the Pope, and promises to boycott the scheduled Miami meetings with John Paul II and the Jewish community, instead organizing protest demonstrations.

But the entire lot was dismissed by Rabbi Tannenbaum in his cited television interview. Asked whether there would be demonstrations in Miami, he responded: “Oh, I’m sure of it. There are marginal people in our community, as there are in the Catholic and other communities, who simply are going to exploit these meetings, with their demonstrations for their own purposes—institutional purposes and private purposes. . . . But those are appeals of hate, and we came here [to Rome] to appeal to hopes and love and mutual respect. And we represent the mainstream sentiment of the American Jewish people, and I think of the world Jewish community.”