

ROME'S SECRET ACCORD WITH THE JEWISH LEADERS

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A deafening silence

Strasbourg was the location for part of the negotiations conducted between the Holy See and the Jewish leaders, held during the Winter of 1962-1963, for the purpose of preparing the secret accord which governs the present situation. Secret negotiations had taken place at Metz some time previously with the Kremlin: they were held during the year 1962 between Cardinal Tisserant and the KGB agent Nikodim, at the residence of Mgr Paul-Joseph Schmitt, the historic spokesman of the heresy of the twentieth century, called 'the religion of Saint-Avoid'.¹ The Communist press at the time, and then, more discreetly, *La Croix* itself, revealed the existence of these negotiations with Moscow. Their conclusion appeared satisfactory to both parties: Rome would henceforth refrain from all criticism of communism and, in return, Moscow would permit observers from the Russian Orthodox church to attend the Council. All over the world, in public and in private, a deaf ear was turned to the revelation of this Rome-Moscow Accord. Silence was mandatory even among those considered as the best-informed commentators. On more than one occasion, from 1963 to 1989, the review *Itinéraires*, analyzed the consequences² of the reality and content of this accord, encountering only general disbelief from minds lacking in memory, critical spirit and especially courage. Minds at the same time lethargic and stuffed on a diet of make-believe, caused by several hours of daily television viewing, contributed greatly to this.

The revelation of secret negotiations between the Holy See and 'the Jewish leaders' came later, not until 1986-87, that is, three to five years after that event. If I speak rather vaguely of '**the Jewish leaders**', the reason is that nothing else has been revealed about them up to the present. We have been told the name of the pope who negotiated, the name of his negotiator and that of one of his secret emissaries, the place of one of the discussions, but not the hierarchical rank or identity of 'the Jewish leaders', or whom they represented.

Let us be clear: I am not speaking about the well-known meeting between Jules Isaac and John XXIII on 13th June 1960. That story was told by Jules Isaac himself and published by the 'Judaeo-Christian Documentation Service'.³

¹ M. Madiran makes reference here to his book *L'Hérésie du XX Siècle* one chapter of which describes the 'religion of St Avold' as expounded by the Bishop of Metz - Mgr Schmitt. M. Madiran explains that he is not maligning a canonized saint, as St "Avold" never existed. "Avold" was a name that arose from an error and is thus an appropriate name for this 'religion'. *L'Hérésie du XX Siècle* was published in 1968 by *Nouvelles Editions Latines* Paris.

² Summary in *Itinéraires*, No.280, of February 1984 pp.1-14: 'The Rome-Moscow Agreement', followed by 'Technical notes'. 'The Rome-Moscow Agreement' was translated and appeared in *Approches* No. 84, Ash Wednesday, 1984. This too has been posted on the *Apropos* website.

³ Account partially reproduced in *Documentation catholique* of 17th Nov 1968, col 2015 *et seq.* Cf.

I am speaking of something else: the secret negotiations, held in the winter of 1962-1963, and revealed in 1986-1987. The same general inadvertence accorded the Rome-Moscow Accord, an inadvertence arising in some cases from design and willing complicity, but in many others from mental sloth and ignorance, has since then treated the revelation of the secret accord drawn up by Fr Congar in the name of the pope as if it did not exist.

This accord, like the accord with Moscow, has been respected by the council and by all the successors of John XXIII.

The revelation of the secret in 1986-1987

The first precise reference to secret negotiations between the Holy See and the Jewish communities was made by the writer Lazare Landau in number 903 of the *Tribune juive*⁴ dated 17th to 23rd January, 1986. The negotiations had been entrusted by John XXIII to Cardinal Bea:

'He sent secret emissaries to the Jewish communities to find out what they wanted. Thus, the Jews of Strasbourg received the Reverend Father Congar, OP, who came, shrouded in mystery, to the synagogue, where he listened for two hours as the community leaders explained their grievances.'

Such was the origin of the 'new perspective' which would be imposed on Catholic doctrine: ***'we must no longer speak of the infidelity of Israel, but of its fidelity.'***

Lazare Landau went into much more detail in number 1001 of *Tribune juive*, dated 25th to 31st December 1987. Let us read his article:

'On a misty, freezing winter's evening in 1962-1963, I went to the Centre communautaire de la Paix (Peace Community Centre) at Strasbourg in response to an extraordinary invitation. The Jewish leaders were holding a secret meeting in the basement with an envoy of the Pope. At the conclusion of the Sabbath, a dozen of us were there to welcome a white-robed Dominican, the Reverend Father Yves Congar, whom Cardinal Bea, in the name of John XXIII had charged with asking us, on the eve of the Council, what we expected from the Catholic Church...'

The Jews, kept apart from Christian society for nearly twenty centuries, and often treated as underdogs, enemies and deicides, asked to be completely rehabilitated. As descendants in direct lineage from the monotheistic stock of Abraham, whence Christianity arose, they asked to be considered as brothers, partners equal in dignity, of the Christian Church....'

Itinéraires, No.306, Sept/Oct 1986, pp 71-74. According to Lazare Landau in *Tribune juive* of 17th -23rd Jan.,1986, Jules Isaac had previously been received by Pius XII in 1949, the audience being obtained ***'with the help of B'nai Brith, Vincent Auriol and Cletta Mayer.'***

⁴ Weekly French-language newspaper published in Strasbourg and Paris and edited by Rabbi Jacquot Grunewald.

The white messenger, divested of any symbol or adornment, returned to Rome taking with him innumerable petitions in harmony with our own. After difficult debates...the Council granted our wishes.

The Declaration of 'Nostra Aetate'⁵ - Fr Congar and the three authors of the text assured me - represented a real revolution in the Church's doctrine on the Jews...

Homilies and catechisms changed in a few short years. In France, the flower of this renewed doctrine was presented by the *Editions du Centurion* under the name: 'The Faith of Catholics'. The French episcopate, in the person of L.A. Elchinger, Bishop of Strasbourg, had played a decisive part in the presentation of the contemporary 'Jewish Question' at the Council. The clergy readily adopted the conciliar decisions. This attitude found powerful backing in the "Pastoral Orientations" of the episcopal committee for relations with Judaism, published by the French Episcopal Conference on 16th April 1973.

In the Vatican itself, this current of thought received endorsement from a most eminent quarter. On 4th October 1983, in front of Pope John Paul II and the World Synod of Bishops, Cardinal Etchegaray, the minister of the Holy See, made a ringing declaration which resolved all the Jewish 'problems' into two points:

- 1. A total and definitive reconciliation with Judaism and the Jews.**
- 2. Repentance and pardon to be sought for the wrongs committed in the past.**

Since the secret visit from Fr. Congar in a concealed part of the synagogue, on a cold winter's night, the Church's doctrine had indeed undergone a total change.'

Lazare Landau made these disclosures apparently as a warning. He was afraid that Rome might revert to her former doctrine. He saw a disquieting sign of this in a declaration from Cardinal Ratzinger to the weekly newspaper *Il Secolo*, and quoted its two menacing points. First, the Cardinal, emphasizing that he was also speaking for the Pope, had said: **'The faith of Abraham finds its completion in Jesus Christ'**. Secondly, he had quoted a remark of Edith Stein after her conversion without in the least condemning it: **'Now I know I am totally Jewish'**. Such thoughts, in the eyes of modern Judaism, show an anti-semitism which was believed to have been repudiated and which must be morally and juridically prohibited.

⁵ See 'The Jewish Question in the Church', *Itinéraires*, No.301, March 1986, especially pp. 60-66. This too was translated and appeared in *Approches* No 93-94, Our Lady Of Mount Carmel, 1986. It has also been posted on the *Apropos* website.

Initial observations

To my Knowledge, neither Fr Congar nor anyone else on the Catholic or the Jewish side has, up to the present, either denied or added to the revelations of Lazare Landau. We may wonder whether Fr Congar at Strasbourg and, subsequently, the 'three authors' of *Nostra Aetate* with him, did, in fact, speak to 'the Jewish leaders' of a **real revolution in the church's doctrine** and whether they really guaranteed that **the doctrine of the church had indeed undergone a total change....**

If this is not quite what the Holy See's representatives said, it is, at any rate, what they gave their Jewish questioners to understand. However it may be, we have in actual fact lived through such a change, we have seen **homilies and catechisms change in a few short years**. When Lazare Landau notes this, he is not mistaken.

Nor is he mistaken when he understands that it is the Christian and the Church who are asking pardon of the Jews, and never the reverse: the request for pardon comes from one side, and there is no reciprocity. The historical wrongs of the past two thousand years are entirely on one side. This is the way it has been presented to us, and this is what we have seen and heard, particularly in the solemn declaration of Cardinal Etchegaray.

Worse was to come

Lazare Landau, probably out of discretion, restricted himself to the conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*. Nevertheless, things had gone much further when he wrote his article in December 1987. There had been the pontifical discourse of 6th March 1982, and the Holy See's document of May-June 1985, which John Paul praised and adopted as his own in his allocution of 28th October 1985.

To sum up this process which I analyzed some time ago in detail 4, let us recall that the conciliar Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, in its fourth chapter, recommended **'mutual knowledge and esteem'** between Christians and Jews; the latter were not to be **'presented as having been rejected by God and accursed'**; and it declared, not for the first time, that **'the Church deplors all manifestations of anti-semitism.'** But, on 6th March 1982, John Paul II added two new ideas which, if we wish, we may perhaps presume to follow logically from the conciliar Declaration, or from the intention of its authors, although they are not contained in it explicitly.

On the one hand, John Paul II affirmed that Christians have the same God as Jews; on the other hand, he invited Christians to collaborate closely with the Jews. Three years later, the Pontifical Commission for relations with Judaism, under its chairman, the notorious Cardinal Willebrands, translated these two new ideas into practice by launching among Catholics the slogan - work together with the Jews to prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah. Thereupon, Catholic pastoral teaching thus defined manifestly fell into line with a traditional idea of Jewish theology, in its interpretation of the function assigned to the **'religions derived from Judaism': 'their mission is to prepare mankind for the advent of the messianic era announced by the Bible'** (declaration of the Grand Rabbinate of France, 16th April 1973.)

Judaism could then hope that it had at last succeeded in making the Church abandon her claim to be the new Israel of the New Covenant, founded by Jesus Christ, true God and true man, the Redeemer, crucified, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven, reigning eternally in this world and in the next. In fact, this claim became increasingly blurred in catechisms, these, too, being in the process of disappearing. And, after the declaration of John Paul II at the time of his visit to the Roman synagogue, the President of the Israelite Consistory of Paris, Emile Touati, felt justified in exclaiming: **'The Church's new doctrine on Judaism and the Jews, inaugurated by John XXIII and the Council, has been forcefully and spectacularly reaffirmed'**.⁶

Can one believe in Jesus Christ if one rejects "anti-semitism"?

To speak of awaiting 'the coming' of the Messiah, without stating that it is a question rather of His return, and that He has already come, brings inevitably to mind the idea and diagnosis expressed by the term 'immanent apostasy', already used in other fields, following Maritain, who invented it. For the terms used in the pontifical document of 1985 do state: **'prepare the world for the coming of the Messiah by working together'** with the Jews. This pontifical document recommends us explicitly **'to accept our responsibility for preparing the world for the coming of the Messiah, by working together for social justice, respect for the rights of the human person'**, etc.

How is it possible that men of the Church can thus have, to that extent and in this respect, abandoned faith in Jesus Christ, without the Christian people being aware of it, and without their being aware of it themselves?

The truth is, they were aware of it - at least, some of them - occasionally - and more or less in isolation. Yet, there is no indication of any official warning in the matter, no solemn warning from ecclesiastical authority. The oft-quoted words of Paul VI about **'self-destruction'** and the **'smoke of Satan'** were whispered confidences, rare digressions, which were not followed by any act of government, any lasting insistence on the sole thing that really matters, the loss of faith and, as Malachi Martin has very rightly said, the **'destruction of Christianity'** in the world and in the church.

The fact is that the faith had been emptied of its content from within, through ideological contamination; and also as a result of intimidation. For intimidation was present everywhere - in public opinion, the media, education and, just as much, at the highest level and in negotiations: the threat of being considered 'anti-semitic' and condemned (morally, if not yet juridically) for 'anti-semitism'. If the Church wanted to survive in the new world of modern democracy and human rights, if she wanted to be tolerated and, perhaps, esteemed, she would have to give certain proof that she had purged from her liturgy and doctrine all trace of what Judaism calls her traditional anti-semitism. In obtaining acceptance of an idea of 'anti-semitism' which is

⁶ *Information juive*, No.56, June 1986. On the particular question of a 'new doctrine of the Church', see Jean Madiran. *'Une nouvelle dynastie'*, *Itinéraires*, No.304, June 1986.

unrestricted and can be extended indefinitely, modern Judaism has gradually eliminated from the predominant ideology, from institutions and laws, including ecclesiastical laws, everything that offended it or, at least, what was most offensive, namely, **the dogmatic affirmation of a Christian dogma opposed to its own negation of dogma.**

A Christian faith which is sieved to reject all anti-semitism can remain attached to the divinity of Jesus Christ, if it is no longer a dogma affirmed dogmatically, that is, if it is no longer a universal truth, but a personal conviction.

Modern Judaism accepts and flatters Christians, provided that they are non-anti-semitic Christians, as it understands the term: for Judaism, anti-semitism begins with the insolent, intolerable affirmation that the divinity of Jesus Christ is an objective, supernaturally certain truth, which must be proclaimed to every creature, and that the Church of Jesus Christ is the new Israel of the New Covenant. And when I say that, for modern Judaism, anti-semitism **begins** there, I wonder whether I ought not to say rather that it **consists** especially in this. Indeed, as Lazare Landau quite correctly observed, we saw the new-style Christian faith, sieved to reject anti-semitism, **change the content of homilies and catechisms in a few short years** . In speaking of Christian dogmas, the catechisms said less and less:

This is.

They said more and more:

Christians believe that this is.

Everyone may believe as he pleases, if it is an individual belief which leaves his neighbours in peace and does not intervene in social life. Catechisms (or whatever replaces them) may proclaim the divinity and the miracles of Christ as being the opinion of Christians, and Christians may believe in them as a 'religious opinion'. The liberty of 'religious opinions' is promised by article 10 of the Declaration of Rights of 1789. This religious opinion may be expressed as a conviction which one has personally formed through reading the Gospel, or as the result of a mystical experience. In the light of this ideology, the Christians of the second half of the twentieth century have been insidiously urged to remain Christians, but in the same way that one may be a Kantian, a naturist, a vegetarian or a socialist. In fact, such is what they are. They still know and say they are Christians but, to the extent that they are so in this way, they are Christians no longer.

The Christian believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ not because, after study and reflection, or by spiritual inclination, or poetic impulse, he ascribes to Him a divine nature. All this may have its place in the preparation for the faith, but is not itself the faith. The Christian believes in the divinity of Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ Himself declared that He was the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, and because we know it by the teaching of His Church. Such is the 'formal object' that is, the motive of supernatural faith. This is an intolerable insult to modern Judaism, the Judaism of rejection: rejection of the divinity of Christ, rejection of the Holy Trinity. It can tolerate that Christians should, on their own responsibility, ascribe a divine nature to the historical personage of Christ: it can be

tolerated as a poetic myth, a symbolic hyperbole, a superstition. It can accept even more easily Christians who venerate Jesus and follow His moral teaching without regarding Him as God. It cannot accept that the divinity of Christ should be taught as a **dogma**, destructive of the **dogmatic negation** of which it is the standard-bearer and which is its essential foundation, as modern Judaism. It considers the preaching of dogma as anti-semitic aggression. The doctrine according to which the greater part of the Jewish people, by not recognizing the Messiah, has been unfaithful to its vocation, is resented as 'teaching contempt'.

The test of conversion

The Jewish negotiators of the secret accord of Strasbourg had understood that they could expect the Church progressively to give up preaching her Credo as a dogma, and thus practically abandon conversion - at any rate, the conversion of the Jews. In the article quoted, Lazare Landau lucidly examined the existence of the obstacle: **'the burning problem of the Christian mission amidst the Jewish community'**. For he is not unaware that **'there is an imperative injunction in the sacred texts of the Church to make converts'**, and he collates ten references from Matthew, Mark and Luke to this effect. But he believed in a **'radical change of direction'** on the part of the Church. Fr Congar had pledged to him that the declarations of the French bishops and that of Cardinal Etchegaray were **'inspired by the Holy Spirit'**.

The essentially doctrinal, theological and religious nature of the demands of Judaism in respect of Christianity is under-estimated or goes unnoticed because, more often than not, Jewish pressure on the Church is expressed most conspicuously by historico-political recriminations over persecution. In substance: Christians, mainly Catholics, have always persecuted the Jews, to the point of provoking their attempted total extermination by Nazism, the final fruit of Christian Europe.⁷

Such is the perspective in which we are to understand, for example, the declaration by the new Grand Rabbi of France, Joseph Sitruk, on the eve of his assumption of office:

'Judaeo-Christian relations are more important for the goyim', [that is, non-Jews] 'because it is they who bear guilt towards us, and not the reverse.'⁸

In order that Christianity may no longer lie under the accusation of being responsible for all the anti-semitic persecutions and, particularly, for the Nazi-genocide, it must **renounce its theology**, that is, its dogmas. Otherwise, its teaching is a **danger for humanity**, with its **absurd affirmations** on the redemption, the resurrection of Jesus, etc. As Armand

⁷ Cf. for example: **'The Jews were massacred with a gratuitous hatred in a Europe, fed lavishly for thousands of years, by those whom we know, on a teaching of contempt.'** (Henri Smolarski, *Tribune juive*, 1-7 Sept 1989).

⁸ *Actualite juive*, No.173 13th Sept. 1989.

Abecassis explained in the *Tribune juive* of 13th to 19th October, 1989:

'It is not possible, without grave danger both for humanity and for Jews, to teach that God deliberately sent his son to die for men on the pretext that death was, metaphysically, the sole means of salvation for them ...

The Carmel at Auschwitz is the final stage in a theology of the Church developed for the sole purpose of proving to the world that the true Israel is the Christian people (the new Israel!); that the 'New Covenant' professed in the 'New Testament' is the historical and spiritual flowering of the 'Old Covenant'; that the story of the Jewish people ended with Jesus, the Jew put to death on the Cross, because the Jesus resurrected three days later was the first Christian around whom the 'new people' of God thenceforward gather. For two thousand years, the vitality of the Jewish people, deaf to these absurd affirmations, and suffering from the theological anti-semitism of the established Church, seems an excellent illustration of the futility and inanity of the attempt by the Christians to bring back [the Jews] and deform the biblical message.'

In the 11th-17th September 1987 number of *Tribune juive*, the editor, Rabbi Jacquot Grunewald, gave a more qualified, moderate (in his eyes) and resolutely fearless expression to Jewish demands. In the past centuries, **'whether they were cruel, merciful or courageous, the conduct and thinking of the popes did not cease to be inspired by theological anti-Judaism'**. No doubt they **'sometimes condemned anti-semitism'**, and Pius XI had **'courageous words in 1938, when Nazi anti-semitism was triumphant.'** But it was only **'after Jules Isaac had shown, better than others, both the Christian responsibility in the Jewish persecutions and the absurdity of the charge of decide made against the Jews, that the Church, gradually but fundamentally, modified her theological approach towards the Jewish peoples.'** And hurrah for the French bishops who **'were advanced in their attitude by comparison with the Vatican's tardiness.'** After the Second World War, when the Jews had brought to light **'the responsibility of the Church'** in the *Shoah*, it was no longer **'acceptable for the Church to maintain the theological judgement which she had pronounced since the Middle Ages against the Jews and Judaism.'** The fact that the Church then changed her theology is not enough, however, for Rabbi Grunewald. He does not accept that **'the Vatican should refuse to recognize the legitimacy of the Jewish State.'** This refusal **'can be explained only by theological considerations: by the old considerations on the true Israel'**. He concludes: **'Therein precisely lies the proof that the anti-Judaism of the Church has not ceased. As the last bastion of a rear-guard action, the *non possumus* with regard to Israel will remain the stigma which dishonours the Church.'**

If you have quite followed the thoughts of Rabbi Grunewald, and if, moreover, you are aware to what extent what he calls **'the old considerations on the true Israel'** are inseparable from faith in Jesus Christ, you will grasp that what **'dishonours the Church'**, in the eyes of modern Judaism, is believing in the divinity of Jesus.

This is hardly a discovery. Yet no one in the governing circles seems now to remember it.

Furthermore - did you not know? - Jesus Christ was not at all the founder of Christianity. A sound, historical revisionism has put paid to that legend, and believes that so-called '**Christianity**' is really only '**Paulinism**':

'To say that Jesus was the founder of Christianity would have surprised Jesus himself, this Jewish doctor who preached Jewish doctrine. Christianity was founded by Saul of Tarsus, who took the name of St. Paul'. (Paul Giniewski in *Tribune juive* of 14th-20th November, 1986).

The Church in expectation

I am very much afraid that, in the search for means of living at peace among one another, everyone, in the second half of the twentieth century, has taken the wrong road. Instead of attempting an impossible religious accord between representatives of the Christian religion and representatives of the Talmudic religion, we ought to have turned our attention (as we ought to do now) towards what is possible and necessary: the practical conditions for the coexistence of Jews and Christians, without persecutions or injustices, in the same temporal city. These conditions are not so widely accepted as people suppose, and they are probably not yet attained, since so many apprehensions and anxieties are being expressed in the Jewish press, so many angry voices are reverberating, and it has been thought necessary to go to the extent of the draconian restrictions which the law of 13th July 1990 brings to freedom of expression, which, in other matters, continues to be extolled as a sacred value. The situation is stable and calm only in appearance, and, once again, this appearance comes solely from that terrifying, general lack of attention to reality, which, like a curse, grips the socially-dominant classes and ideologies.

But since the course of these things is beyond our control, let us not try to imagine how we might deal with them.

I propose in this respect a much more discreet thought and action.

The great vulnerability of the Catholic Church at present, which her adversaries use and abuse, has manifold aspects. The one about which we can do something directly is not the least important: the Church is no longer in possession, but in expectation, of a universal catechism. For twenty years the Church has lived in a state of *vacatio catechismi*. She '**will have**' one soon. One day. The episcopate and the Holy See are working on it. The previous catechism is no longer in force. It is despised, abolished and untraceable. It had to be republished in 1967 and 1969 by the review *Itinéraires*; and, since then, this modest, privately republished edition is the only one that can be found in stock. Or rather, it cannot be found even there, as the majority of booksellers have been induced not to let it be found there.⁹

⁹ The republication of the Catechism of the Council of Trent by *Itinéraires* as well as its edition adapted for children, the Catechism of St. Pius X, also by *Itinéraires*, are at present being reprinted by D.M.M. which is also the (re) publisher of the Short Catechism of St. Pius X. (*Editions Dominique Martin Morin*, 53290 Bouere; Tel. 43.70.61.78) [This question of the catechism presupposes that errors regarding this question do not find their

The usefulness of bringing the literary presentation of catechisms up to date, in accordance with the evolution of modern languages, is not in dispute. But it could have been recalled that the Roman catechism exists and that it remained, in force, still obligatory as a norm, until the time when the new one, with modernized wording, appeared. The *vacatio* would have been avoided. This was manifestly not desired. All the pre-existent Catholic catechisms were withdrawn from circulation, and even prohibited morally, then by administrative edict. Such a repudiation cannot have been honest.

The Church must be in expectation, to be sure: in expectation of the return of Jesus Christ.

But not in expectation of the deposit of faith, which she must at all times preach to all nations: she already possesses it, she is its repository and she must at every moment deliver it to the human race.

Such is the case; and that is what happens. Whenever two or three baptized persons are gathered together in the name of Jesus, they are those on whom He depends to ask in His name for the Catholic catechism, and to accept the grace of faithfully keeping and faithfully transmitting it, come what may. ■