



Max M. Kampelman Papers

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REMARKS BY
MAX M. KAMPELMAN
TO
THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY CONVENTION

Grand Hyatt Hotel
Washington, D.C.

March 28, 1989

I share my thoughts with you today as one who appreciates the importance of religion in providing the cement to bind together the human beings on this earth with a spirit of brotherhood that is at the essence of all religious faiths. I believe that fanaticism is the enemy of idealism, in religion as in politics. I am also aware that too often religion and religious worship tend to divide rather than to unite us.

Our forefathers, the ancient Hebrew tribes, made their historic contribution to civilization by proclaiming to their neighbors that there was only one God. The immense significance of that insight was in the concept that if there is only one God, then all of us are His children and, thus, brothers and sisters to one another. It is important for us to note that the ancient Hebrews might not even be remembered today, except as a learned footnote in history -- and,

certainly, their offspring would have been lost in the vast chasm of history -- had this new and astute insight not influenced new religious groupings.

Let me elaborate upon this. The Talmud asks: "Why did God create only one man?" In order that all men would have the same ancestor, and no man could claim superiority over another, was the response. Leviticus (19:18) could then command: ". . . you shall love your neighbor as yourself, I am the Lord." In the same chapter of Leviticus there is found the equally strong requirement to love the stranger who sojourns with you as one's self (19:33-34). Out of this came the Talmudic tale that when the Egyptians, in pursuit of the Hebrews, drowned in the Red Sea and the angels were said to rejoice in Heaven, the Lord rebuked them, saying: "My children are drowning and you would rejoice!"

The religious principle of human brotherhood has inevitable social and political implications. Democracy is the political expression of that religious ethic. The notion that human beings are the children of God and that they thus have the potential for developing that which is God-like within them is clearly anathema to any political system which does not respect the dignity of the human being. The development of democracy as a political philosophy and system of governance was an

inevitable outgrowth of the belief in the dignity, liberty and integrity of the human being.

Another important contribution of religion to democracy is the Biblical assumption that there is a source of higher authority. This obviously suggests that Man and his institutions are fallible. If Man is fallible, he should be humble. Yet, throughout history great injustices have been committed in the name of religion by those who, without humility, were persuaded that their's was the real truth.

It is said that Bishop Fulton J. Sheehan was scheduled to speak in Philadelphia at a town hall and decided to walk from his hotel there. He became lost and was forced to ask some boys to direct him. One of them asked "What are you going to do there?" "I am going to give a lecture," replied the Bishop. "About what?" the boy asked. "About how to get to heaven. Would you care to come along?" "Are you kidding" said the boy, "you don't even know how to get to town hall."

The First Amendment to our Constitution, prohibiting Congress from making any law "respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof" was the earliest and most successful attempt, within the spirit of religion, to guard against those who might improperly use

Government power to corrupt it. Alexis de Tocqueville quickly grasped the significance of the separation of church and state, noting:

"Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention; and the longer I stayed there the more did I perceive the great political consequences resulting from the state of things, to which I was unaccustomed. In France I had almost always seen the spirit of religion and the spirit of freedom pursuing courses diametrically opposed to each other; but in America I found that they were intimately united, and that they reigned in common over the same country . . . I found that they differed upon matters of detail alone; and that they mainly attributed the peaceful dominion of religion in their country to the separation of church and state."

G.K. Chesterton, with that same appreciation, later called America "A country with the soul of a church".

There is one other related ingredient of religious belief that must here be noted. It is that the human being is not only capable of reaching God-like dimensions through the process of growth, experience, performance and faith, but that there is also a baser and lesser part of the human being. The ancient Jewish Rabbis referred to that in the soul which was good and that in the soul which was evil, "Yaitzer Hatov" and "Yaitzer Harah." Reinhold Niebuhr, the great Christian theologian, called it "Children of Light and Children of Darkness." We have here as well the root of modern

psychiatry. This dichotomy in the human being is understandably also found in the societies which the human being creates. Thus, just as democracy is the political expression of the religious notion of human brotherhood, so is dictatorship an expression of the destructive side of us. This explains the horrors of the Nazi phenomenon, as well as the brutalities of the Soviet system.

Throughout the ages, forces have arisen determined to resist and turn back the forward movement of civilization. But history has demonstrated that the power of Man to stretch himself into a more God-like form of self cannot be permanently denied. Thus, the importance of the biblical assertion that Man was made in the image of God. Within every age the drive for human liberty and dignity is dominant.

It is not surprising that religious liberty should be among the first victims of totalitarianism. That was certainly the case in the Soviet Union which had earlier proclaimed its atheism, an effort to erase religion from within, which failed. The leadership has perhaps now, after more than 70 years, come to understand the need to adjust to the power of religion within the souls of the people over whom they rule.

There is reason to believe that what we are observing today in the Soviet Union is a multi-national state in ferment. In areas like the Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and the Caucasian Republics, widespread smoldering yearnings for self-determination are becoming increasingly evident. There is an explosive growth of the Islamic population in Central Asia. The revival of religion in the Soviet Union creates an added dilemma for Communist authorities.

Past efforts by Soviet authorities to obliterate the memory of deep spiritual yearnings within the people and to stop the intrusion of new ideas into their closed society were doomed to fail. Their rigidly bureaucratic administrative system, obvious industrial stagnation, and agricultural inefficiencies, are no match for the evolving humanism which is a part of Western civilization and a major contributor to its industrial and cultural productivity. There are no walls high enough to keep out the winds of change carrying ideas for human dignity from other parts of the world. These realities are impressing themselves on a dynamic Soviet leadership and we hope will reflect themselves in both doctrine and deeds. Certainly, the dramatic electoral campaign and election results of three days ago vividly demonstrate that a serious process of change is under way.

The Soviet Union is the last remaining empire of our day. Its empire consists of former states now absorbed within Soviet geopolitical boundaries; contiguous Eastern European states; and states in different parts of the world over which it exercises control. But imperialism comes with a high price tag. The West learned that the price is too high. The Soviet elite may be reaching that conclusion as its third world clients become dependencies lining up for handouts. It is estimated that Vietnam costs the Soviets more than \$3.5 billion annually; Cuba \$4.9 billion; Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia \$3 billion; and Nicaragua close to \$1 billion. The total cost to the Soviets may well reach more than \$35 million a day.

The Soviet economy is working poorly, although it does provide a fully functioning military machine. Massive military power has provided the Soviets with a presence that reaches all parts of the world, but this military superpower cannot hide the fact that its economic and social weaknesses have third world characteristics. The Soviet's awesome internal police force has provided continuity to its system of governance, but a Russia which during Czarist days exported food cannot today feed its own people.

The new leaders of the Soviet Union are fully aware of its problems. I suspect they are also aware of our strengths,

reflecting the vitality of our values and the healthy dynamism of our system. It is increasingly evident to all that there is a moral and practical difference between a dictatorship and democracy, even as both are powerful nuclear powers, just as there is a difference between a prison yard and a meadow.

Democracy works best. A closed, tightly-controlled society tied in knots by a repressive bureaucratic system, cannot compete in a world in which economic development and the power which it produces is all important. Rapid technological change, stimulated by an information explosion that knows no national boundaries, requires the vitality that comes from freedom. Over the long term, there is an inescapable link between human liberty, democracy, and economic well-being.

We hope the time is at hand when Soviet authorities looking at the energy of the West, comprehend that repressive societies in our day cannot achieve economic health, inner stability, or true security. We hope the leadership of the Soviet Union has come fully to accept that it is in its best interest to permit a humanizing process to take place. We hope it now understands the need to show the rest of us that cruelty is not indispensable to its system. We hope the ruling elite today realizes that its historic aim of achieving Communism through violence has no place in this nuclear age. We hope Soviet

authorities will join us in making the commitment that our survival as a civilization depends on the mutual realization that we must live under rules of responsible international behavior. We hope -- but as yet we, regrettably, cannot trust.

But even as we cannot yet trust, we have a responsibility to ourselves to observe developments in the Soviet Union carefully and to do so with open eyes, an open mind, and an open heart. General Secretary Gorbachev has shown himself in a dramatic way willing to reconsider past views. The words glasnost and perestroika have been repeated so extensively that the ideas they represent may well take on a meaning and dynamism of their own which could become internally irreversible.

We are told that Gorbachev has internal difficulties and rivalries, with neither "reformers" nor their opponents able to gain a decisive victory and break a current stalemate. That may or may not be. It is, however, good, to remind ourselves of de Tocqueville's dictum that the most dangerous time for an authoritarian regime is when it begins to reform itself.

The United States negotiates with the Soviet Union within the context of these realizations. We keep our eyes, our minds and our hearts open. But we also never forget the need to maintain our vigilance in order to preserve our values.

For us, the peace we seek is not merely the absence of war. A genuine and desirable peace is, to paraphrase Andrei Sakharov, built only on the foundation of justice, freedom, and the rule of law. The peace we seek is best characterized by the concept of "Shalom."

All of us and our societies fall short of our aspirations. We grow by stretching to reach them. As we do so, however, let us be reassured by the conviction that the future lies with freedom because there can be no lasting stability in societies that would deny it. Only freedom can release the constructive energies of men and women to work toward reaching new heights. A human being has the capacity to aspire, to achieve, to dream, and to do. We seek these values for all the children of God. Our task is to stretch ourselves to come closer to that realization. With its realization, we not only find the path to peace, we find peace.

Thank you.

50- SEE ME
— WHERE??

3/28

United States Department of State
The Counselor

December 9, 1988

MMK: Rabbi Jeffry Wohlberg called.
Would like you to address Rabbinical
Assembly convention on March 28
from 11:45 to 1:00. 25-min.
presentation w/Qs and As on
arms control and U.S./Sov. relations

If you agree in principle, letter
will be forthcoming.

(o) 362-4433; (h) 362-1636

OK

Sharon

Grand Hyatt Hotel
in DC

3/28/89

Send this ✓

Rabbi Jeffrey A. Wohlberg

Adas Israel Congregation
Connecticut Avenue at Porter Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

(202) 362-4433 (H) 362-1636

December 13, 1988
Tevet 5, 5749

Ambassador Max M. Kampelman
3154 Highland Place, N.W.
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Ambassador Kampelman:

I am delighted that you are willing and able to accept the invitation of The Rabbinical Assembly to address its convention at the Grand Hyatt in Washington at its plenary session on Tuesday, March 28 between 11:45 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

The convention, which begins on Sunday evening, will be attended by about 500 Conservative rabbis and their spouses, and will reflect attempts to better understand the issues which confront us as Americans and as Jews. Needless to say, your expertise is one that we sincerely appreciate, and your insights have always proven to be of significance in understanding East-West relations and the geopolitical considerations which affect us both as Americans and as Jews.

We would suggest that you speak for about 25 minutes and then appreciate your answering questions from the floor.

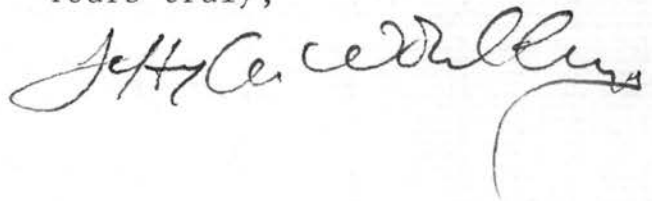
Please let me know the title of your talk as soon as possible so that we can print it correctly in our program and publicity. After consultation

with your administrative assistant, I am using the working title of "Arms Control and East-West ^{US} ^{Sov.} Relations". This certainly focuses on the area, but feel free to adjust it as you deem appropriate.

Again, thank you for accepting our invitation. As always, I look forward to learning from you, as we all do.

Warm good wishes.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey C. Williams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

cc: Rabbi Matthew Simon

SA

3/28

Matthew H. Simon

Rabbi
B'nai Israel Congregation

6301 Montrose Road
Rockville, Maryland 20852

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14 December 1988

The Honorable Max M. Kampelman, Counselor
Department of State
Room 7250
Washington, DC 20520

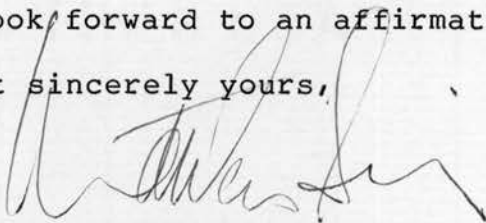
Dear Ambassador Kampelman:

As Chairman of the 1989 Rabbinical Assembly Convention, I am delighted to invite you to address the assembled rabbis on Tuesday morning, March 28, 1989. Your insight and wisdom on questions relating to nuclear disarmament, war and peace, and the tensions between the major powers will be heard by the 500-700 colleagues at the Convention.

The Convention will be held at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, 10th and H Streets, N.W., Washington, D.C. We will make every effort to meet any special needs you may require.

I look forward to an affirmative response.

Most sincerely yours,

 N.A.N.
Matthew H. Simon
Rabbi

MHS/jd

Rabbi Jeffrey A. Wohlberg

Adas Israel Congregation
Connecticut Avenue at Porter Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008
(202) 362-4433

March 30, 1989
II Adar 23, 5749

Dr. Max M. Kampelman
3154 Highland Place, N.W.
Washington, Dc 20008

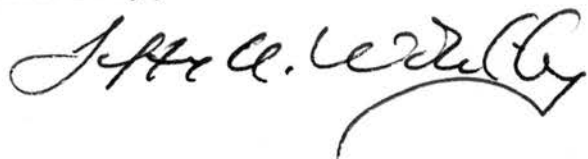
Dear Dr. Kampelman:

I am certain that the Rabbinical Assembly will formally express its thanks to you for speaking at our convention, for generously sharing your time and beautifully expressing your ideas. I simply want to add my personal thanks for your graciousness and for accepting our invitation.

I am truly sorry that I missed the bulk of the time that you were speaking, especially the questions and answers. I understand that you were terrific. If the talk itself is ever published, please tell me where so that I may read your remarks in order to better think about them.

Judy joins me in extending sincerest good wishes for continued health and fulfillment. Warm regards to Margie.

Sincerely,



FRIED, FRANK, HARRIS, SHRIVER & JACOBSON

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May 31, 1989

Rabbi Jules Harlow
The Rabbinical Assembly
3080 Broadway
New York, NY 10027

Dear Rabbi Harlow:

I am sorry for the delay in responding to your letter of May 5. I was out of the country when it arrived.

You will find from the enclosed that I have indeed edited and corrected the transcript of my talk made from the tape. I do hope that you will find it easily understandable.

All my best.

Sincerely,



Max M. Kampelman

Enclosure



THE RABBINICAL ASSEMBLY **התאחדות הרבנים**

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Director of Publications

REBECCA JACOBS
Director of Communications

May 5, 1989

The Honorable Max Kampelman
3154 Highland Place N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20008

Dear Ambassador Kampelman:

It was a privilege to hear you address the Rabbinical Assembly Convention in Washington. Many of my colleagues are still talking about your words and about the quality of the man behind those words.

We hope to have your permission to print your presentation in the published Proceedings of the Convention. I am enclosing a transcript made from the tape, with the request that you make any corrections, additions, and deletions that you feel are necessary. I look forward to receiving your typescript, and to its publication which will enhance our Proceedings.

Handwritten signature of Jules Harlow
Jules Harlow

JH:rmf
Encl.