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DECLARATION ON JEWS "SHOULD REACH PARISH LEVEL"

Rome, December 21, 1966

(JCNS) B'nai B'rith leaders Dr. William Wexler, president, and Mr. Saul Joftes, general secretary, were received here by the Pope on Monday, and told him that the Church's declaration on relations with the Jews was a "fine contribution to humanity".

They expressed the hope that the declaration, adopted by the Ecumenical Council last year, would be vigorously implemented and emphasised the need for the declaration's message to reach parish level.

The B'nai B'rith leaders put forward a plea that the special ad hoc commission to be formed to give effect to the declaration, should begin work soon.

After the audience both men said that the Pope's attitude was "very co-operative". They had arrived in Rome after meeting Dr. Josef Klaus, the Austrian Chancellor, in Vienna.

They suggested to the Chancellor that legislation should be introduced in Austria making antisemitism a crime against the State, and they advocated bringing school text-books up-to-date with explanations of the Nazi period, and improvements in teaching democracy.

Dr. Klaus is reported to have assured the B'nai B'rith leaders that he would consider these matters and also the Austrian reparations issue.

Dr. Wexler and Mr. Joftes left Rome for Madrid to meet General Franco, the Spanish Head of State, on Wednesday, to discuss the implications for the Jewish community of the new law providing for a "legal shield" to guarantee religious liberty.

They were also to discuss whether international organisations such as B'nai B'rith, would be allowed to function in Spain.

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