

## **Professor Melloni**

**March 22, 2001**

**Victoria:** O.K. Professor Melloni could you tell us a little bit about your background please?

**Professor Melloni:** Oh, yes. I'm supposed to be historian, I've been trained in at here in Bologna at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. And I'm working since 1983 more or less on the papers and the life of John the 23<sup>rd</sup>, Angelo Guissepe Roncalli. And this work has been concentrated in either the publication of some of his documents and in the preparation of the monograph on his activity in Turkey between 1935 and 1944. And indeed with Professor Derigo of this foundation and center, the preparation the so-called biographical sketch needed for his beautification that indeed took place on September 3, 2000.

**V:** And could you tell us a little bit about the institute?

**M:** Yes, the institute is center of research in the field of church history and history of religions founded by Guiseppe Dosetti early in the 50's and now it's a big library, one of the largest libraries in Europe for this type of subject not linked to the church. It's an independent institution and supported by a certain number of foundation and governmental institution in the private foundation which as given in the past year grants to this institute, one is an American foundation, the McNeil foundation and the Roster Chaplin, Huston, Texas which played a major role in supporting and financing the research on John the 23<sup>rd</sup> but that's been done here in the past twenty years.

**V:** We're ready to roll camera. Professor Melloni, where did Roncalli's papers go after his death? What was the history?

**M:** Well after the death of John the 23<sup>rd</sup> according to his testament his personal papers didn't remain in the secret archives at the Vatican but were given to his secretary, Monsignor Capiwillia. What Roncalli wanted was to have his paper available for historical research probably and not simply bury it in the secret archives at the Vatican. Actually, Monsignor Capiwillia with this paper made a number of very useful additions of papers namely his spiritual diary, the joy of a soul, and he published many of his letters to the family, to some of his friends, and collaborators. And he also published some of the documents concerning his activity from the early eighties and some of this paper had also been made available to his students for more sound research. A copy of this paper was also made available to the postulation, the office that was charged to prepare the documents for the beautification of John the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the beautification of the Pope has been asked very effectively by some of the fathers gathered in Rome early in the 60's for the second Vatican council. And indeed Paul the 6<sup>th</sup> decided that this process of colonization should be carried out by normal ordinary ways so through apostilation. A Fryer, Father Carriolli gathered some of this paper in copy from Capiwillia and from other sources. When this institution has been involved in the biographical sketch of John the 23<sup>rd</sup> in

need for the colonization we asked for a copy of the documents from the Monsignor Capivillia and from the postulation from the office, Vatican office of the postulator, and now what we have here in this institution..

(A cell phone rings)

**V:** Excuse me, can we cut? Will someone announce all cell phones off please? O.K. all cell phones are off now? You told us about the papers...

**M:** And know the series, the complete series of these papers either the Capivillia's one and the Vatican one has been gathered here to make a general list for the documents concerning John the 23<sup>rd</sup> available everywhere...

(People talk in background for a second)

**M:** All the documents are available here and are either coming from Capivillia or from the postulation. Well this is a sound basis for the biography of the 23<sup>rd</sup>, one of the few case already available for the papacy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**V:** O.K. Role camera. So let us enter now into the mystery why did Roncalli do what he did in regarding the Jews and can we do this chronologically starting in January 1939 and incorporate my question in your answer.

**M:** Well, Roncalli was the apostolic delegate in Istanbul namely a diplomatic representative of the Pope not acknowledged by the government as such this was difference by instance, with the nuncio. Roncalli was chosen for this type of activity early in the 20's by Pious the 11<sup>th</sup> and he was very linked to the general politics of Pious the 11<sup>th</sup> and so by the end of 1938 and the beginning of 1939 Roncalli shared this attitude growing into the Vatican to make a more public and sound condemnation of this racism. Roncalli didn't know that Pious the 11<sup>th</sup> had asked late in the, in 1938 to an American Jesuit for the lafarge to write an encyclical against racism but the idea was widespread in Catholic milieu and this explains why Roncalli on the epiphany of 1939 on January the 6<sup>th</sup> made a sermon in Istanbul condemning the German racism, condemning anti-semitism. It was a sermon which has been published in the journal, in the newspaper of the Jewish community of Istanbul and it remains at the witnesses of a changing attitude in the Vatican diplomat in the first step of Nancy's (?) anti-semitism. The change come step by step between the July of 1940 and the spring of 1942. The state refers to several meetings he had at this time with ambassador Von Poppin, the German ambassador in Ankara who tried to use Roncalli to offer through the Vatican a separate peace to the allies. The offer was refused but Roncalli established a relation with Von Poppin and probably he gathers from him, he gathered from him information and details, he didn't proceed. What is definitely clear is that Roncalli reported to Rome between '41 and '42 as a clear perception that everybody at the Vatican knew that this genocide of the Jews was going on. There is a very interesting piece about this that is a part of his personal diary of October 1941. He goes to Rome and he had an audience with the Pope and it is interesting that the Pope asked Roncalli what people thinks of his silence about the

behavior of the Germans. This is interesting because the idea of asylum of Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> in the 60's became one of the accusation against Patchelli. **(Note: The audio for the past two sentences is bad; it sounds like a chair or floorboard is cracking in the background very loudly)** There was no comment in this journal by Roncalli because of course it's obvious that the Vatican has made the choice of silence as public reaction to the genocide. Roncalli changes his attitude, it is no more like '39, perfectly devoted to parallel Vatican attitude but as a different attitude in '42 simply because in Istanbul he had personal knowledge of the Jewish community and a personal knowledge of the destiny of the Jewish people. For him the Jewish in Istanbul were no more a category, an abstraction, but real people with real stories and destinies. And in '42 he accept to meet some of the leaders of the Jewish agency and to give his help for those who are trying to escape mostly from Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria through Istanbul toward Palestine.

**V:** What were the names of some of the people from the Jewish agency?

**M:** Well, the most important meeting is a meeting with Hiem Berlasa, was responsible for the Jewish agency of the ? in Istanbul and it is uncommon for the Vatican diplomats in the Meditaranian at this date to be available to such compromising meeting with a such higher level people of the Jewish agency.

**V:** What happened in January '42, Pope John was writing, he was aware and wrote about the show and he wrote to the Vatican and in his conversation with Von Poppin he said we should now talk about the two million Jews as with the Polish officers, can you tell us about that?

**M:** Yeah, in 1942 there is a certain effort to clarify the real situation about the genocide that is not the first priority in the agenda of the Vatican diplomacy and it is not the first priority in the agenda of the alliance military actions. What is interesting is that Roncalli in January '42 take for granted that everybody knows that the figures of the Showa are to be spoken in terms of millions. In a conversation with Von Poppin he referred to Rome, Von Poppin tried to persuade Roncalli that the Vatican should look with more favorable attitude to the Germans. Though king of the massacre Cotton, Polish officers killed by the Soviet army. And Roncalli see that I answer it smiling that the problem is to remember the millions of Jews sent to death. This means that in January '42 for Roncalli as the Vatican diplomat as he was it was obvious that the figures in terms of millions. This is interesting because the Jewish agency in May 1942 tries through the daily telegraph to make sort of advertising about the dimensions of the disaster in Nazi Europe and they didn't found so much credibility around the world and indeed in July at the Madison Square Garden they tried to offer false but much more realistic figures in terms of sent hundreds of thousands of people and this is the figure that Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> recalls in his Quizmaso speech in 1942.

**V:** So let's go to Pope John's actual help. What did he do to help the Jews and let's go country by country. Let's start with Bulgaria. What did he do in relationship to Bulgarian Jews?

**M:** What we know about Roncalli attitude toward the help of the Jews is limited by the fact that we do know all Roncalli's papers concerning his activity in Turkey and even his help towards the Jews during the Showa but we do not know all the other Vatican papers

**V:** Excuse me, we're going to change. It's very very good. It's going very well and looks very good.

**M:** Sorry, we had a wrong date about Cotton, it's July '43, a letter to Magniona, July '43.

**V:** That's the Polish officers.

**M:** Yeah.

**V:** Ok, we'll just have you say the Polish officers in 1943 when we start rolling again and I'll cut it in. I'll edit it in. Rolling, ok, about the Polish officers.

**M:** The episode we were talking about were that of the conversation with Von Poppin that Roncalli refers in the letter to the secretary of state Maliogne on July 1943 about the massacre of Cotton and the millions of Jews killed at this time. About the actual help that Roncalli gave to people, the first help was to accept a direct contact with the Jewish agency, with the Jewish community in Istanbul that is quite uncommon. Everybody in Europe, the Vatican diplomats were usually available and sometimes even determined to give the possible, everything was possible to help Jewish which were converted to Christianity but past Jewish people, baptize Jewish community or villages or families. What Roncalli does is to help the Jews as such without taking into account they were converted or not to Christianity. What he does is to write to a certain number of his colleagues in Romania and Hungaria, in Bulgaria and in France, asking them to do some concrete action to have the permission from local authority and to have this small groups of Jews safe carted to leave their countries. The more effective is the action about the Jewish community in Dosnetria where he was able to get a certain number of transit permission from the Jewish agency available for those Jewish family to leave the country.

**V:** Where is this area today? Trans...

**M:** Dosnetria.

**V:** Is today what countries?

**M:** It's between Romania and Hungaria. It's, the most effective action on this plain was made through civil authorities. Mostly in Bulgaria when Roncalli lived there from 1925 through 1934 and in this case Roncalli used all the contact he had in Bulgaria to guarantee a certain number of people a transit toward Istanbul and the Bosphorus to leave the Balkans in this situation. Though this the visa, a legend, actually that is very useful to recall many after the sixties have talked about the false baptism certificates issued by Roncalli to provide help to the Jews escaping from Romania and Hungaria. Actually it's an interesting legend because as each lesson gives a part of truth and falsify truth in itself.

Roncalli didn't issue any false baptism certificate. This was useless indeed because the problem of these Jews was not to be depicted as baptized people. The attitude of the local authority, either the Nazis or the civil authorities was against the Jews on a racist base not on religion basis. And it would have been for Roncalli something much, something weaker if compared to his real action. It didn't try to help Christian Jews but it tried to help people in despair. So there have been no false baptism certificate issued by Roncalli but he sent, we have at least three proofs about this, he sent through the Vatican diplomatic channel the permission of the Jewish agency to transit through Turkey and to go to Palestine to single group of Jews to the side of Europe. And this has been very effective and this creates a real change in Vatican diplomacy. It's a real exception indeed.

**V:** Were these Palestinian certificates of immigration?

**M:** Yeah.

**V:** Can you say that?

**M:** Yeah, they are Palestinian certificates of immigration issued by the Jewish agency that Roncalli posted to those were expecting them to get out from this country. Some of them went as expected, some of them not. In total there are figures about the people that Roncalli helped to get out from Hungaria, Romania, and Bulgaria. There was a reference to 24,000 made by Roncalli himself. And probably this means in general the type of help he gave it was not help to single individuals coming out but groups in great harmony and uncommon collaboration with the Jewish agency in Istanbul.

**V:** How were the visas transported, did the nuns take them or how were they sent?

**M:** Well probably the ordinary way of the diplomatic Vatican mail. Either by people going or through Rome and special messengers carrying this things. Of course we do not have any mention about the system of transportation of visa throughout the borders of Europe because to leave any single witness about this would be very impolite. Roncalli at this time, as one of these collaborators, post in Athens and he knew that the Germans had a perfect knowledge of the secret code used by Vatican diplomats. So it, there are a certain number of letters he writes to this friend in Athens using an Italian patwa, patwa of Berganano to make, to confuse the Germans about the subject or the conversations so he knew that the war was going on and the rules of war about this so it's obviously enough that we have no actual documents concerning act that were hostile to the German regime.

**V:** Were there any more specific details that you'd like to give about Bulgaria that he had a relationship with the king of Bulgaria? Can we cut? O.k. we're rolling. Go ahead Professor.

**M:** So there is a report sent to Rome on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of May 1943 in which Roncalli says that difficulties doesn't come only from the supposed enemy of the Jews in Europe but also from the indifference of other people. For instance this date he has a meeting with the

Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Steinert, was actually a Jew, too, and Roncalli says I asked his help in the treatment of the Jews. Helping the holy sea is trying to do in favor of this people in the case that are offered to the holy sea intervention and the Ambassador answer me saying that the help to the Jews for the transfer is extremely difficult because of the lacking of transportation instruments, and (speaks Italian), for the diminution for the way to transfer them to the, to Palestine. And Roncalli has even the gratitude of the Jews and express and clear gratitude of the Jews. For instance, always in May 1943 came Berlas...

**V:** Wait, I want you to say this on camera. Can you wait and look when you're ready to say this on camera. Are you ready to talk about that now? O.k. roll camera. O.k.

**M:** What Roncalli says in many circumstances to his superiors in Rome is that the Jews are glad to receive this help and acknowledged the help they received in May 1943. He wrote to the secretary of state in Rome that Careem Barlas went expressly to the apostolic delegation to thank him for the help he gave to the transfer of a small group of Jews from Slovakia to Istanbul and to the Palestine. Not everybody in the Vatican was so happy of this type of contacts. Of course as we said we know all of Roncalli's paper but not all the Vatican papers on the subject but from the part of this document that we have known in the past years we realize that some of the Vatican diplomats were not exactly convinced that to help the Jews to escape from Europe and to go to Palestine was the right solution. And Roncalli himself feels the need in a certain moment to excuse himself seeing that the idea of the Jews to rebuild the kingdom in Palestine was a utopia and he was aware that to help them in this situation was not simply neutral act but something with a very serious political effect.

**V:** Are there any specifics on what he did in Bulgaria? Did he have a relationship with the king in Bulgaria? And did that effect it in any way?

**M:** Uno momento.

**V:** O.k. We'll just stop. And so now you want to read the letter?

**M:** No, if you want we can talk about Bulgaria and say that in

**V:** He mentions Bulgaria?

**M:** Yeah.

**V:** O.k. are you ready? You tell me when you're ready.

**M:** Do you want me to read some of the, something about the Struma?

**V:** No, I've got enough of the Struma. The Struma's too negative and I already have enough.

**M:** And, I can read the two documents of 1943.

**V:** Are they regarding Bulgaria?

**M:** Well, one regarding Hungaria, Croatia, and Bulgaria.

**V:** O.k. can you just summarize it for me without reading it? O.k, you just look at it and then when you're ready

(Victoria talks to the crew for a minute)

**V:** We just talked about the letters from Heilem Barlas to Bulgaria. O.k. roll sound, roll camera.

**M:** What Roncalli writes to Rome in the spring and summer of 1943 makes us understand the extension of his activity. He writes that Barlas went to ask his help for 100; 500; 1,500 kits from Slovakia which were saved through Hungaria and Istanbul and sent to Palestine. And Barlas asks also Roncalli intermediation to have the Vatican help to save a group of 400 Jews imprisoned in Croatia in the camp of Sietzesenovotz and Roncalli ask a step of the Vatican that will not arrive. What he says that has been done and this is one of the few information we have of the effect of his activity in Bulgaria is that in July '43 he writes to Barlas assuring him that the request and the visa transit for Bulgaria has been given directly to King Boris in Bulgaria and this will be an effective step that will save some hundreds of Bulgarians Jews.

**V:** O.k. Are you aware of any tension between the Vatican and Pope John in this matter? Was there any tension between them? And in his actions?

**M:** We're going to the papacy. To the sixth? Good.

**V:** So he was not yet Pope so when he was still Papa Roncalli was there any tensions between the Vatican and Roncalli in Turkey in those years?

**M:** Well there were a few tensions related to the fact that some of his activity in Turkey were not part of the standard action of a Vatican diplomat in this, in this moment. The attitude of the holy sea as such was a very prudent silence toward the extermination of Jews. And Roncalli was not polemic against this official standard of the holy sea but as in practice a different attitude and he made different actions. Meeting people, offering help for bringing the visas of transit to different parts of the Balkans and this make difference and made him not very appreciated by his superiors. When indeed in 1944, Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> decided a retaliation against De Gaulle. Roncalli was involved in this maneuver. De Gaulle refused to accept the nuncio Valeri also at the Vichy regime as nuncio for the new liberated France. And Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> decided to accept this request. He retired Valeri from Paris but he decided to send Roncalli, was not a first class nuncio. And then Roncalli arrives in Rome early, late in December 1944 before going to France. Either Monsignor

Montini, either Monsignor Cardini and the ? state say that only the Pope has the sign to promote him. Simply to say they were not part of his most devoted fan.

**V:** We'll stop just for a moment. Is there any other stories that you can think of, sound can stop. (Sound returns)

**M:** In September '42 Roncalli writes to the nuncio in France, Valeri, asking him help for the Jews of Papignon, the dark triangle, to escape from the South of France to go to Palestine and at this date it's a very interesting step because Roncalli doesn't follow the procedure that these two asked, the Sevtrial state (?) to do something to interest the France nuncio to the destiny of those Jews. He arrives directly to Valeri then this means that probably he didn't have too much confidence that the Perpetual state would have been sensitive to this type of request and so preferred the direct contact with his colleague in France.

**V:** Well was that unusual?

**M:** Yeah. It's really unusual. Out of the procedure and this make us understand that for Roncalli the direct experience of the Jewish community in Bulgaria and lately in Turkey was something that has really changed his perception of this, of this people and even this religion.

**V:** Can we roll camera? So what you've just started to talk about. Can you trace through Roncalli's attitude towards the Jews and then as he became Pope John the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**M:** Yeah. After the war we do not have many informations about the fact that all what Roncalli have done for the Jews during the war has been acknowledged. And even his personal reflection on this episode and moments is not very developed. Indeed. What he changes is the attitude of the Catholic church towards the Jews as soon as he became Pope in 1958. From the very beginning of his pontificate he has had to endure the Jewish community in Rome. Is very different. There are two small episode of 1959 that are very moving and very well rememberd by the Jews themselves of Rome during the beginning of the lent it was going by car neat the synagogue and he crossed the Jews coming out of the synagogue coming out of Shabbat and he asked the driver to stop and standing up out of his car he gave his blessing to the Jews coming out of the synagogue. This was an attitude of friendship that had a very relevant follow up in the good Friday of 1959 when the Pope ordered to make a small correction to the Roman liturgy. During the Roman liturgy of the Good Friday there are a certain number of prayers for all sort of categories. There are the kings, there are the believers, there are the non-believers, there are the Christians and there results are from a immemorabile time a prayer for the Jews. And it was used to say (speaks Italian) and perfidy was a technical word in latent meaning they had not the good faith, they had the wrong faith but because it has been used in the liturgy for the Jews it became and agent of discrimination and condemnation for the Jews and John the 23<sup>rd</sup> ordered take out the word perfidy from the liturgy and to say simply let's pray for the Jews. Stop. And this after 1959 was never repeated in the Roman liturgy and now the official liturgical books say simply (speaks Italian). This make a great



impression on the Jewish community. It make very important man, Professor Shcull Isaak so brave to ask to the papacy something that at the time was really odd and uncommon. In June 1960 he had an audience with Pope John the 23<sup>rd</sup> and asked him to add to the agenda of the coming counsel a document condemning anti-semitism. And Pope John the 23<sup>rd</sup> accepted this idea and this was one of the few documents adding into the agenda of Vatican 2 by his personal initiative and asking to Cardinal Bear, a German Cardinal and famous biblist, the confessor of Pious the 12<sup>th</sup>, by the way, and Bear prepared a document called Degudase on the Jews with the condemnation of anti-semitism. This document was presented to a commission.

**V:** What was the name of this document in Latin?

**M:** Degudace. As I said, Degudace. On the Jews. It was a very short document. One page document of condemnation of anti-semitism and it was presented to the commission which was empowered to decide the agenda for the Vatican counsel which was supposed to open in October 1962. And in June 1962 this document was withdrawn because the Secretary of State said to this commission that the approval of a document against anti-semitism would have been impossible for the counsel because it would have implied a recognition of the State of Israel and would have implied a reaction of the Arab states. And so apparently in the summer of 1962 the idea of a document against anti-semitism dissapeared from the agenda of Vatican 2. It was John the 23<sup>rd</sup> himself that in December of this year after the first session of this counsel re-entered the document into the agenda and asked again to get prepare another document against anti-semitism and on the relation between Jews and Christians as one of the most important points of the second Vatican counsel. Actually this document was one of the most important step of Vatican 2 because it condemned anti-semitism it condemned the idea that the Jews can be considered for the murder of Jesus Christ and with a certain number of discussions the document was indeed approved by Vatican 2. It was a very interesting experience because it revealed, the document were debated by all the bishop through all the world gathered together in the Basillica of St. Peter that anti-semitism was still early in the 60's a compliment of the Ecclesiastical culture that many bishops were still pervaded by the idea that a Jewish plot did exist in the world, that the Jews to a certain extent be considered guilty for the death of Jesus and that discrimination has a certain reason to exist in some way. And the majority

**V:** It's o.k., go on.

**M:** The majority of the bishops approved on the contrary the document Nostratate and this has been an effort very important for the Catholic church. Nothing of what is today the relation between the Catholic church and the Jewish people and even the state of Israel would have been possible without John the 23<sup>rd</sup> and this...

**V:** O.k. stop. (Tape goes to next side) Stop sound. (Sound stops and restarts) Rolling.

**M:** And so the document Degudace refused in '62 was put again on the agenda of Vatican 2 in December 1962 by a new initiative of Julie Zack and John the 23<sup>rd</sup> together

and indeed this was the discussed during the counsel and approved in October 1965 and indeed is known as it's usual for the documents of Vatican 2 with the first words of his beginning, *Notra et tatay*. And it's a document that is very important because without this document, without the impulse of John the 23<sup>rd</sup> gave to this subject and to the counsel nothing of the future development of the relation between the Catholic church and the Jews would have been conceivable at all. Nothing life pilgrimage of John Paul the 2<sup>nd</sup> in Jerusalem would have been even possible. And this has changed the relation of the Catholic church with religious diversity as it is represented by the Jews and indeed with courage to diversity as such. This could be considered probably one of the most important effects of the experience of the showa that Roncalli had in 1943, 1944 in Turkey. Because the choice to consider the Jewish agency a reliable partner to act according to the principal of Christian charity. This as deeply impacted as all conception of life and of church. It perceived that diversity and tragedy could be a positive challenge to the church and not simply a way to demonstrate how evil the modern world is. It's impressive because in his first encyclical Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> in 1939 wrote about the war as the best... Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> in the first encyclical consented the war and the catastrophe in Europe as a demonstration that the church was right. That the modern world deciding to act without taking into account the moral principle of the Catholic church was wrong and has to pay for this mistake endeavor. And on the contrary Roncalli the tragedy of the world was nothing positive and neither a condemnation of the modern world but was really a way to experience fraternity between diverse human beings.

**V:** What do you know of Roncalli's relationship with the Turkish authorities. Did they help him? Did they hinder him? Or did they interact with him at all?

**M:** Well Roncalli did not have official relations with the Turkey authority as a diplomat. It was seen as half diplomat status so it was received as the minister for foreign affairs but it did not have great acknowledgement to his activity at all. What he knows is what is known through the reports he receive from the other ambassador. For instance, Von Poppin praise with him anon because he says the President has done a good choice trying to keep Turkey out of the world, of the war and this means to not be, to not accept, to help the ally forces in the circumstances. The problem about Roncalli and about Turkey is that up to now Turkish documents concerning the relation and activity of Roncalli are kept by the archives in secret, they are not available for study so maybe that surprises could be found there. But in general Roncalli did not find from the Turkish authority any kind of a position to his help.

**V:** So they were neutral. They didn't hurt or help.

**M:** Yeah, neutrality was taken into the most rigourus sense as actually it was on all the other fields of the war in this years.

**V:** Was Roncalli involved in any way in diplomatic overtures made by the axis to the west through Turkey like a separate peace towards the end of the war? Was Von Poppin or anyone using him?

**M:** Yeah of course. From Von Poppin tried from the 40's on, from early the 40's to use Roncalli as a sort of telephone to communicate with the Vatican and to make offers for the separate peace. And Roncalli on this level was always very prudent because he refers very carefully the terms and the condition of this proposal and there is no comment from his part on this type of project. This is typical of Vatican diplomacy where all the decision has to be conveyed toward the center and the higher level, the secular state and the Pope himself and no one was allowed to have a personal opinion on this.

**V:** O.k. Cut. Cut sound.

**M:** The idea to gather a counsel Roncalli made this announcement in January 1959 had a serious effect of renewal sort of wake up for the church. All along preparation from 1959 to 1962 the problem is that while Vatican 2 was prepared the actual draft of documents and constitutions was carried out by close commissions headed by the Cardinals and the principals of the Roman carrier. So with a very different style and spirit if compared with Roncalli's attitude and Pope John ideas of ? of the church. There's two lines that hope on one side and the conservative and ? and condemnation on the other clashed in October 1962 when the counsel actually was opened. And at this moment it happened something very uncommon in the Catholic church. Namely there have been a certain number of reaction against John the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Some of the bishops thought that he had to gather a counsel was a mistake, a counsel was too complicated and it required too much freedom to be acceptable to a hierichal party as the church itself and either the decision about the Jews, either the starting of a aust politic either the commitment of the Pope toward the peace were considered political mistakes. His attitude toward the Cuban missile crisis is idea to have direct contacts with some Soviets, prominent leaders, where judged very severely by some of the bishops and by other politicians around the world. The change of the attitude about the Jews was particularly important because it was not simply a matter of foreign relations of the Vatican state toward the state of Isreal neither a simple question of theological clarification of inconsistency of the accusation of killing Christ against the Jews was a major and spiritual issues because it pertained to the status of diversity in the Church and diversity that the church experiences in the world. And this we do not have many reactions of Roncalli to his opponents the tradition of anti-semitism the tradition of monolithic anti-communism as the only guideline of foreign policy of the Vatican has not been replied except with a small sentences a few days before his death when commenting on those who have accused him of changing the gospel to favorize the Jews and the communists and so on. The Pope answered that the gospel doesn't change but we are able to understand it better.

**V:** O.k. Cut. (sound cuts and returns) About how this period, you spoke about how this period in Turkey effective Pope John's papacy but you made the point the Roncalli and Pope John the 2<sup>nd</sup> were the only Popes to directly in contact with the Holocaust. Could you briefly say something about that? O.k. We're gonna start filming for a minute. We'll gonna roll out but audio will continue. O.k.? So when you're ready. O.k. Sound, rolling.

**M:** One could notice that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century few Pope has a direct experience of what Showa was. Of course Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> has a direct experience of this but leading inside the

walls of the Vatican. He didn't have any direct contact with the Jewish community and the Jewish tragedy. This was not the case of John the 23<sup>rd</sup> and on a different scenario of John Paul the 2<sup>nd</sup>. There were two Popes who had direct experience and witness how deeply the Showa effective the conception of the world and probably the conception of God that is available to believer after the Showa. And this maybe explains not every difference and particularity of their pontificates but something about the difference in those two pontificates everybody can notice.

**V:** O.k. Cut. (sound cuts and then returns) Camera. O.k. Professor.

**M:** In February 1944 Barlas arrange a meeting between Monsignor Roncalli and the chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, Hertzog, comes to Istanbul to meet Roncalli and to ask his help for a very large operation namely the escape of 55,000 Jews from the Clusnestria region and of the Nazi occupation in Romania. And Roncalli accept this meeting, accept to act in favor of this purpose and through the Secretary of State tried to offer help to this people from Romania. Some of them succeeded in escaping, some of them not. And this is one of the typical case in which Roncalli accepted to take some risk in his helping the Jews of, during the Showa. Not because it put into danger his life, he lived in a neutral country. He was with a seeming half diplomatic state in Greece but yet no personal risk to be imprisoned or killed or nothing of this. But he has a personal risk toward his superiors to a certain extent. A risk in front of the church. The action in favor of the Jews was actually a matter that involved just a few Vatican diplomats. Roncalli himself, Monsignor Casulo, Monsignor Rota. And none of them was rewarded with a brilliant ecclesiastical career after the war at all. And this give the sense that for Roncalli the exercise of practical help of the Jews escaping from the Balkans is something made to his own risk. There is a letter he wrote to Rome that has a very ironic passage. It says that he is sorry to ask the incomodity to help the Jews and he said I am one with Jews in asking your pardon for the incommodity that I'm giving to the Holy sea for this action which does not let hope degrate success. And this is the type of risk that Roncalli says. The only thing that we have not said maybe clearly enough is that the documents of the holy sea that we do not know about the Showa are now matter of discussion of the commission of Jewish and Catholic historians and the problem of this documentation that has been kept from the holy sea comes after that in 1963, a theater drama, the Viker of German writer of Holcouth put under requisition Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> and the reaction of defense of Pious the 12<sup>th</sup> persuaded Paul the 6<sup>th</sup> to publish 11 volumes of documents pertaining the activity of the holy sea during World War 2. It's the largest selection but it's a selection indeed and so on many of this aspect we do not have a clear and perfect knowledge of what was the real position of the holy sea. The only thing that's clear is that the official position was a position of silence. Of dramatic, questioning silence but the internal debate that indeed has this type of outcome is probably a matter for the sort of the future.

**V:** O.k. Cut. Thank you very much.

TAPE ENDS

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