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Box 41, Folder 3, Oberammergau Passion Play, 1978.

Chrono -

Oberammergau

MEMORANDUM

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date February 9, 1978

to Bert Gold

from Marc H. Tanenbaum

subject Meetings in Oberammergau, February 3-5, 1978

In response to requests contained in recent letters from Dr. Alois Fink, editor of the Rosner version of the Oberammergau Passion Play, and Hans Schwaighofer, the director, an AJC delegation consisting of Miles Jaffe, William Trosten, and myself went to Oberammergau for a series of meetings that began on Friday, February 3, and that concluded on Sunday, February 5.

In their confidential letters and notes to us, both Fink and Schwaighofer expressed a growing concern over efforts on the part of "ultra-conservative" forces in Oberammergau to prevent the adoption of the more pro-Jewish Rosner version of the Passion Play in order to return to the earlier anti-Semitic Daisenberger script. Apparently, following the generally positive reactions to the August 1977 preview of the Rosner version that was expressed by the audiences and in the German and overseas press, Fink, Schwaighofer, Helmut Fischer and their colleagues took for granted that the Oberammergau Town Council and villagers supported the adoption of the Rosner text as the basis for the 1980 production.

In their euphoria, they seemingly had not realized that the pro-Daisenberger forces (which included not only traditionalists but unregenerate Nazis and anti-Semites) refused to give up the ghost and set about systematically organizing the villagers to defeat the Rosner version.

Ernst Zwink, the Burgomeister, was apparently the chief organizer of the pro-Daisenberger forces. He and his associates had recently conducted a "public opinion survey" of the villagers and announced that 60 versus 40 percent of the townspeople favored returning to Daisenberger. Both Fink and Schwaighofer disputed the validity of the survey, and reported that Zwink refused to show them the polling data.

While the Oberammergau Town Council had earlier voted 11 to 6 in favor of the Rosner text, Fink and Schwaighofer had now become quite concerned that the pro-Daisenberger forces led by Zwink were gaining strength and if left uncontested might well defeat the Rosner script during the March 5th election.

They invited our AJC delegation to make a special trip at this time as a means of dramatizing to the Zwink-pro-Daisenberger forces that "the outside world" was watching what was going on in Oberammergau, and that there would be consequences in response to their actions. The pro-Rosner leaders were strongly supported by Lufthansa Airlines, especially in the person of Karl Koepcke, public relations director and a good friend of Bill Trosten's. From our August visit, we were also aware that some officials in the West German Government and in the Bavarian Tourist Ministry also informed Oberammergau authorities that they favored the Rosner version.

While in August we met mainly with the pro-Rosner group and had a remarkably constructive dialogue (see my last Oberammergau memo, August 25, 1977), we decided now to meet with "the opposition." On Friday afternoon, we had lunch with Burgomeister Zwink at the Alois Lang Inn in Oberammergau. Interestingly, he brought his own English interpreter, even though Koepcke and Trosten are fluent as translators.

Our meeting with Zwink lasted four-and-a-half hours. It should be recorded that Miles Jaffe and Bill Trosten were absolutely superb in their presentation of the issues - cool, disciplined, rational, persuasive. It was a marvelous piece of AJC teamwork at its best.

We informed Zwink that we were not accusing either Oberammergau nor himself of being anti-Semitic; that we did not believe in the corporate guilt of the entire German people; we were not anti-Christian. In fact, we showed him a large collection of Anglo-Jewish press clippings which documented our efforts to interpret the August 1977 Rosner preview affirmatively in the United States and elsewhere.

But we made it clear to Zwink in forceful and unmistakable terms that we regarded the Daisenberger text as "structurally anti-Semitic" and that no cosmetic changes could redeem it of its fundamental anti-Jewish nature. Koepcke pressed the point, in support of our views, that the Daisenberger text would damage Bavaria, German, and Christianity in decisive ways.

When the meeting was over, all of us had the clear impression that we had shaken Zwink pretty strangely.

Later, on Friday and Saturday, we met at great length with Fink, Schwaighofer, and Fischer to discuss strategy. On Sunday morning, we met again to draft a letter to Mayor Zwink as a memorandum setting forth our position. Miles drafted an excellent text (copy of which is attached) and Trosten and Fink translated it into German. While we were working on the texts, Helmut Fischer - who, in addition to

playing Jesus in the 1970 production is also deputy mayor - came in to tell us that Zwink had just called "a special meeting" of the Town Council for next Wednesday, February 8th. Fink, Schwaighofer, and Fischer thought that that might be a positive development, and a direct response to our 4½-hour conversation with Zwink.

Fischer reported that he had been asking for such a meeting of the Town Council for several weeks in order to hold a vote on the Passion Play text, but Zwink kept avoiding summoning the Town Council.

On late Wednesday, February 8th, Schwaighofer telephoned Bill Trosten (in Montreal). The Town Council had met and voted 9 to 6 - in favor of Rosner! Unless some other manipulation develops, the chances appear that the 1980 production will be based on the Rosner script.

Footnote: because Miles, Bill, and I took the time and trouble to travel overseas in order to bolster the Rosner side, the feelings of appreciation for our efforts on the part of the pro-Rosner group became increasingly strong and manifest. On Saturday afternoon, while Miles and I were visiting with Schwaighofer and his wife in their home, I said to Schwaighofer - "Our struggle now must be concentrated on defeating the Daisenberger text and winning a victory for the Rosner script. But once that happens, we will want to talk with you further about making needed additional changes in Rosner which still has some anti-Jewish problems." Schwaighofer responded spontaneously, "We will make whatever changes you request that are within reason and our competence. We will cooperate as fully with you as you have with us!" We drank a schnapps, or several, to that!

MHT:RPR

Enclosure

cc: M. Yarmon
 M. Jaffe
 W. Trosten
 S. Hirsh
 Z. Shuster
 M. B. Resnikoff
 M. Fine
 H. Applebaum

cc L Yarmon

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date December 6, 1978
to Area Directors
from Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director
subject BAVARIAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY SYMPOSIUM ON PASSION PLAYS AND
 F/ OBERAMMERGAU SEMINAR ON ANTI-SEMITISM.

BACKGROUND

AJC has been involved since the 1950s in efforts to change the anti-Semitic character of the Oberammergau Passion Play. Our comparative content analysis, Oberammergau 1960 and 1970 -- A Study in Religious Anti-Semitism, focused scholarly attention on the anti-Jewish impact of the play, and led to a decision on the part of some Oberammergau officials to replace the present Daisenberger text with an earlier text (the Rosner script) in which the role of the Sanhedrin and "the Jews" is less central to the drama. As detailed in a memorandum to you of August 1977, that decision was reversed when ultra-conservative factions committed to the Daisenberger text were voted into office in Oberammergau.

In August of last year, an AJC delegation met with key officials of the Roman Catholic Church in Bavaria, German academics, leading editors and radio and TV personalities, and a delegation from Oberammergau. We proposed that the time was past due for a serious, systematic examination by German scholars and church leaders of the Catholic Church's present understanding of Jews and Judaism, and the ways in which passion plays advance that understanding or contradict it. Professor Franz Henrich, director of the prestigious Bavarian Catholic Academy, responded enthusiastically to our proposal. A day-long symposium, sponsored and underwritten by the Academy, took place this year in Munich on November 19. It was followed by an invited visit to the village of Oberammergau. The AJC delegation consisted of: Miles Jaffe, national chairman of the Interreligious Affairs Commission; Richard Weiss, chairman of the AJC Chapter in Los Angeles and a leader in interreligious affairs; William Trosten, director of AJC Development who is fluent in German and who spent years in Bavaria with the American Military Government; Zachariah Shuster, of Paris, consultant in interreligious affairs in Europe; and myself.

THE SYMPOSIUM

Planned in cooperation with AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department, the symposium, entitled, "The Passion of Jesus as a Spiritual Drama," drew an overflow audience of some 400. Participants came from Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Italy, with particularly heavy representation from Oberammergau. They included a high-level cross-section of academic scholars, theologians, Christian educators, Government officials, civic leaders, and numerous representatives from major German print and radio and TV media, including Der Spiegel, Der Stern, Süddeutsche Zeitung, and Bavarian Rundfunk radio and German educational television.

At the initiative of Prof. Henrich, each of the participants was given a German-language copy of the AJC study noted above, the first line-by-line comparative analysis of the Daisenberger texts. They were also given copies of correspondence between "The Citizens' Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play" and AJC which clearly explained why AJC felt that the Daisenberger text was "structurally anti-Semitic" and needed to be abandoned in favor of a more sympathetic text. A basic document on Judaism that was prepared by us for publication by the Vatican in seven languages in 1975 was also given to each participant.

In his opening remarks, Prof. Henrich disclosed that he had received a letter from Mayor Ernst Zwink of Oberammergau charging that the Symposium was "a conspiracy on the part of the American Jewish Committee and certain Oberammergau people" to undermine the Passion play, and asking that the Symposium not be held. Rejecting that forcefully, Prof. Henrich declared, "The Oberammergau Passion Play cannot be considered the affair only of a village," and stressed the "Christian duty" to apply current historical research and biblical theology to an understanding of the Passion narrative.

Three scholarly papers were then presented. Dr. Bo Reicke, professor of New Testament at the University of Basel, Switzerland, spoke on "The Historical Background of the Passion of Jesus," synthesizing the findings of contemporary scholarship on the Roman occupation of first century Palestine, the actual role of Pontius Pilate as a ruthless Procurator, the Roman institution of crucifixion, the Roman domination of the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees, and the limited role of Jewish leaders in the trial of Jesus.

Dr. Franz Mussner, professor of Biblical Theology at the University of Regensburg, presented a paper, "Who Bears the Guilt for the Death of Jesus? Theological Perspectives." He reviewed the various and often contradictory accounts of the trial and crucifixion found in the New Testament, noting that the Gospels were composed in different times.

Dr. Friederich Kienecher, professor of New German Literary History and Didactic Literature at the University of Paderborn, spoke on "The Passion of Jesus: A Critical Literary Perspective," detailing the folk understanding of the Passion as medieval morality play in contrast to modern literary treatments of the Passion by great creative artists.

Both Professors Reicke and Mussner stressed that, the removal of anti-Jewish references or tendencies in passion plays "is not the same as rewriting the Gospels. In telling the story of the crucifixion, the Gospels held back a good deal of the political, legal, and religious realities of the day, such as the actual rule of the Romans in Palestine, and who was responsible for what. The realities must be considered in order to have a correct portrayal."

They added "The Gospels themselves are highly conditioned and specialized interpretations of the Passion. One must always consider that the Gospels were written decades after the death of Christ at the time that the young Church was separated from Israel and developing its own faith and independent consciousness. In that process, the Church developed a growing picture of the Jewish people as the enemy, and inevitably made a caricature of the complex reality of the Pharisees."

The scholars agreed: "In depicting the Passion of Jesus, the Jews must now be portrayed with more honesty, with greater respect for their religious traditions, and with greater recognition of their rich traditions of scholarship. We still have a lot of revision-to do in telling the Passion accounts. The Catholic Church has taken heed of the decisions of Vatican Council II in revising its Christian education, teachings, and liturgy. There is a whole assortment of passion plays throughout the world, at the head of which is the Oberammergau Passion Play, which have acted as though relations between Christians and Jews have not changed. After Auschwitz, it is a scandal to continue in that manner."

In a surprise appearance, Italian film director Franco Zeffirelli, who produced the widely-acclaimed NBC-TV production, "Jesus of Nazareth," appealed to the producers of the Oberammergau play "as a Christian and a son of Abraham," not to repeat the errors of the past.

A panel discussion which followed included Dr. Hans Schwaighofer, director of the Rosner version of the passion play, Dr. Alois Fink, its editor, Dr. Ernst Maria Lang, a Munich architect born in Oberammergau whose father was director of the play in 1920; and several others, including Rabbi Peter Levinson of Heidelberg and myself. Dr. Schwaighofer underscored the intentions of Father Daisenberger by quoting from his instructions to the director of the first production

of his play in 1860 "Instruct the actors playing the Jewish parts to do so in a manner that is filled with hatred and vileness, those who play Christian parts should do so with love and merciful qualities "

Based on a paper I had prepared on the role of passion plays in fostering anti-Semitism, I traced the portrayal of Jews as the anti-Christ from medieval times, and documented the relationship between the theological image of the demonic Jew and Hitler's portrayal of Jews as "untermenschen."

The symposium was given prominent coverage in the daily and Sunday press, on radio and on educational TV

OBERAMMERGAU

At the invitation of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft of Oberammergau (the several hundred people affiliated with the alternate Rosner production) our AJC delegation went to the village of Oberammergau the next evening, to lecture on "The History of Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Christian Relations Today " The program began with an excellent filmstrip on the subject /"Christians and Jews: The Troubled Brotherhood" by Sr. Suzanne Noffke, O.P., Alba House Communications, Canfield, Ohio / and ended with a lively question period For many of the villagers it was their first exposure to the history of anti-Semitism in the Christian West, the Holocaust as viewed through Jewish perspectives, and to some basic knowledge about Jews, Judaism and Israel The reception was warm and appreciative. As a result, AJC was invited to organize a week-long seminar of lectures by Jewish scholars at Oberammergau in the coming year.

EVALUATION

These events in Bavaria are important, not only for the future of the Oberammergau Passion Play, but for the future of German-Jewish relations far transcending the play itself.

Certainly the debate over the Oberammergau Passion Play is no longer a controversy between American Jews and Oberammergau villagers. The Munich Academy symposium has shifted the perspective -- now it is German Catholic academicians, theologians and church officials who are demanding that justice be done and that town officials put an end to anti-Semitism and a new sensitivity based on knowledge, and honest dialogue is beginning to develop in Oberammergau itself

RPR

78-700-86

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

OF B'NAI B'RITH

315 Lexington Avenue
New York, N Y 10016

MEMORANDUM

To: Burton Joseph
From: Ted Freedman and Nat Kameny
Date: June 13, 1978
Subject: Oberammergau Passion Play

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

National Commission
National Program Committee

BENJAMIN R. EPSTEIN

This report will outline the background of the problem and to provide a resume of our meetings and discussions in Munich, Oberammergau and Rome.

Background

Ever since Medieval times, Christians have been putting on "passion plays" -- in Churches, outdoor arenas, seminaries and public halls -- about the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. These passion plays generally are simplistic, distorted and vilify the Jews.

Oberammergau, the village in the Bavarian German Alps, is famous for its Passion Play which has become a major tourist attraction and drew some 500,000 persons from 113 countries in 1970 alone. Almost all of the 5,000 villagers of Oberammergau take part in the Passion Play which is staged during a 3-month period and has become Oberammergau's main industry and livelihood. The Oberammergau play has been presented every ten years since 1634 when it first was performed to fulfill a vow made during an epidemic of a plague. In the more than three centuries since, at least five different versions have been used.

For years the play has been criticized by many Bible scholars and theologians, both Jewish and Christian, as falsifying fact and doctrine by blaming Jews collectively for the crucifixion of Jesus. The present text has been a major issue in recent years with Jewish organizations demanding its revision and some even threatening sanctions against Oberammergau and the play if it is not changed.

A version by Father Ferdinand Rosner, a Benedictine priest, was used in 1750 and 1760. The Rosner text was replaced in 1860 by the Daisenberger version which is viewed by most knowledgeable observers as anti-Jewish.

In the version of the Passion Play written in 1860 by a local parish priest, Father Josef Daisenberger, the Jews are shown as the personification of death, hate, envy and avarice. Daisenberger also makes the Jews collectively responsible for the crucifixion and presents a false picture of the role of Pontius Pilate. In the Rosner version, as edited by Dr. Alois Fink, the sins are represented by allegorical figures wearing, and then carrying, appropriate masks. Moreover, the modified Rosner text suggests that not all the Jews voted against Jesus, the scene of the money changers is not shown, and the character of Pontius Pilate is based on modern historical theory.

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The first steps toward changing the text were taken in 1960 when the then mayor, Raimund Lang, set up a commission of specialists in history, literature and theology to study practical possibilities. One of the members was Professor Carl Orff who suggested that the village revert to the Rosner 1750 text, but in a shortened and partially rewritten form.

The proposed change in text set up a controversy between the reformers and the old guard which became a key local election issue this spring. Prior to this a special text performance of the new version was given for the press in August 1977 on the 15th, 17th, 19th and 21st, and for the Oberammergau villagers on August 13. On February 8, 1978, by a vote of 9 to 6 with two abstentions, the Oberammergau City Council decided to use the 1750 text written by Father Rosner, rather than the script written by Father Daisenberger. Following a heated controversy in Oberammergau the presidents of the Oberammergau City Council voted against any reform in the Passion Play and agreed to maintain the more traditional Daisenberger text.

Dr. Alois Fink of Radio Bavaria was intimately involved in the preparation of a modified Rosner text to be substituted for the Daisenberger text. Dr. Fink claims that Rosner was not anti-Semitic but rather "he saw the Jewish people as representing mankind, torn between heaven and hell."

Heading the reform movement backing the use of the Rosner text is a wood-carver, Hans Schwaighofer, who was supported by the then deputy mayor, Helmut Fischer. Supporters for the Daisenberger text were the local mayor, Ernst Zwink, regarded as a cautious politician rather than a fanatic on the issue, and Anton Preisinger, the producer.

It is with this background that ADL's International Interreligious Seminar made the decision that on its visit to the Munich area it would seek appointments with Mayor Zwink, Anton Preisinger, who is currently the producer of the Daisenberger version of the Passion Play, and Hans Schwaighofer. In addition, it was decided that discussions would be held with Catholic leadership in Munich in advance of our visit to Oberammergau to secure as much background information as possible.

Dr. Alois Fink, Radio Bavaria

The Seminar group met with Dr. Fink at Katholischen Akademie (Catholic Academy) in Munich. Dr. Fink made a comprehensive presentation of the subject, providing a general overview of the origin of the play from the earliest versions that were performed in 1615 in various places throughout Europe and the Rosner version of the play in Oberammergau in 1750. Dr. Fink is an avid supporter of the Rosner script and describes it as representing the zenith of Southern German Baroque literature. Dr. Fink states quite emphatically that the Daisenberger version is justifiably accused of showing inclinations toward anti-Semitism. He indicates that in a purely literal manner, anti-Semitism also occurs here and there in Rosner's text as in any passion play but it does not form the base for the entire dramatic structure of the play, whereas the Daisenberger version adapts the driving of the merchants from the Temple into the main motif for the persecution of Jesus. Dr. Fink argues that the Rosner version presents

"the Jews" far more discriminatingly and shows that Jesus' adversaries present arguments and are dignified in the advocacy of their tradition, and that Jesus' real antagonists are Satan and vice. Dr. Fink expresses some puzzlement as to why the leaders of Oberammergau, using increasingly dubious means, especially after what he describes as the success of the trial run version of the Rosner script, wish to prevent the people of Oberammergau from becoming familiar with the play and allowing them to make the decision as to the suitability. He states that the arguments based around the Oberammergau Passion Play became the main topic of the local election and that emotions were permitted to override fact. He claimed that two arguments were put forward against the accusations of anti-Semitism "the gospel" naturally cannot be changed and, thirty years after the Hitler era one should be able to gradually approach the "Jewish question" again "with less prejudice."

He describes the village of Oberammergau as a split and hostile community more so than at any time in its history. He states that there are economic factors involved in the decision not to change and that the claim of maintaining tradition is readily used to oppose any outside interference, thereby preserving what Oberammergau people believe to be an important Christian and Bavarian cultural treasure.

Dr Fink indicated he was asked to examine the Daisenberger text to see if revisions could be made to make it acceptable. After extensive study on his part he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to make the necessary modification without drastically revising the text so that it would no longer be the Daisenberger text. In effect a new Passion Play text would have to be prepared. He argues that the Rosner text is in fact the best text available and relatively free of the kind of anti-Semitism expressed in the text to be used by Oberammergau in 1980.

There were many nuances in Dr Fink's remarks which not only were in his prepared presentation but also in extended informal conversation that he had with the Seminar group. He believed that concerted pressure was needed to try to force the city leadership to effect the change in substituting the present text for the Rosner one. He further indicated because of the controversy many of the first class actors who normally would be involved in the play have refused to participate, and it was necessary for the current producer to seek second and third line actors to assume some of the parts. He even speculated that it would not be unrealistic to anticipate that there will be a delay in the town being able to put on the play in 1980 as scheduled. That is not to say that the play would not be performed but that the starting date might very well be delayed.

Dr. Fink was questioned extensively as to possible options, all of which he felt had merit but that the major thrust of any effort should be the substitution of the Rosner text for the Daisenberger text. It was in this light that Dr. Fink was asked if a new and more extensive prologue to the play, both spoken and written, might not be an additional item in order to lessen the anti-Semitic impact of the Passion Play. He responded that this suggestion had some merit, but again stated in the interest of the overall objective, whatever pressure should be applied should be in the direction of a change to the Rosner text.

(over)

With this as a general background the Seminar group met privately to strategize as to possible approaches for our meetings in Oberammergau. It was agreed that a small group would meet with the mayor at the same time that another group would be meeting with Hans Schwaighofer, the leader of the reform movement and former producer under the Rosner trial text, and that the entire group would meet with the producer of the Daisenberger play, Anton Preisinger.

Mayor Ernst Zwink

Since the town is split on this issue, it was the group's judgment that to go in to see Mayor Zwink on the issue of the text -- Rosner vs Daisenberger -- would simply maintain the polarization. We agreed to talk in a general way about changes which would deemphasize those aspects of the performance that focus negatively on the Jews, and to press for their making such modifications. At the same time, since the question of a prologue was not at issue, it was agreed we would suggest consideration of a revised prologue which would be more in keeping with Vatican II and the Vatican Guidelines which are much more extensive on the subject and which were formulated in 1975.

On Friday, May 5, we motored to Oberammergau and a small group of four persons -- Nat Kameny, Ted Freedman, Joseph Lichten and Larry Leshnik -- met with the mayor, Ernst Zwink, in the Oberammergau City Hall. We were ushered into the boardroom of the City Hall. The mayor came in and sat at the head of the large table and formally started the proceedings. We soon realized the mayor was warily perceiving us to be -- that is the ADL delegation -- a part of all prior delegations and obviously made the assumption that we were seeking the same objectives. We made it a point to indicate to him that we were concerned not with the specific text used, around which there had been such controversy, but with the impact of the performance of the Passion Play. He was quick to point out that there was no intent to be anti-Semitic and that this in a sense was a replication of the Gospel. In turn, we explained that we felt the play was not in the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines and that while his intent was not to be anti-Semitic, nor did we believe him to be anti-Semitic, the result was in fact contrary to their intent.

We suggested that in our judgment changes could be made, and some modification of the manner in which certain aspects of the play were presented could, in effect, avoid the anti-Jewish implications that flowed from it of Jewish culpability in the deicide. While the mayor defended the play and dramatic license - he appeared not unmindful of the problem and possibilities that we tried to convey to him. We further noted that there were aspects of theatrical performances that one would find in any play under one producer versus another, in which certain items are not highlighted in quite the same way without in any way losing the dramatic appeal of the production. While he did not state categorically that he could make these changes he did indicate quite clearly that he was prepared to accept our views, which he appreciated, and that he would discuss them with the producers in an effort to see what modifications might be made. We also proposed that in addition to such modifications as might be made, consideration be given to an enlarged prologue, inasmuch as a prologue now exists, by extending it both in the spoken and written form. It could be helpful in minimizing if not avoiding some of the misunderstanding and anti-Jewish feelings. We further indicated

that we had a sample text prepared by a theologian for his consideration and that of his colleagues in the town council, which we felt was more in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines. He accepted the copy of the proposed prologue and indicated that he would share it with others in the town council. The meeting was concluded on a friendly note, and I think it would be fair to say with guarded optimism that the reception of our committee was positive. While it would be unrealistic to assume that major changes will be forthcoming it would also be incorrect to believe that no modifications or changes will occur as a result of this meeting. It certainly enables ADL to maintain contact with Mayor Zwink and to offer concrete proposals regarding modifications in the production.

The Reformers

The group then met with Hans Schwaighofer and Hans Lang, both principals in the reform movement. Schwaighofer while professionally a woodcutter also was responsible for the trial performance of the Rosner text production of the Passion Play which had been rejected by the town council.

Their view was that the community, while extremely conservative and tied to "tradition," is not consciously anti-Semitic. They point out that there are some people in Oberammergau who do realize that the play conveys a stereotypic presentation of the Jews. They also noted that while the Roman Catholic Church in Bavaria has indicated that the play must be in conformity with Vatican II, nothing much has happened to produce these results. Schwaighofer noted in particular that the problems related to the play were largely in two categories, one described as tradition and the other, which he describes as laziness. He stated that one major force in the resistance to change is that the older people had gone to great pains to learn parts and there was a major reluctance to change scripts and accordingly have to learn new parts, and that for many of them it would be difficult if not impossible. Schwaighofer and Lang are closely allied with Alois Fink in Munich and support the Rosner text. During the course of discussion we raised the question about the possibility of a further revision of the text, in effect producing a new Passion Play which Schwaighofer felt would be unthinkable as would be, in his opinion at the present, any major changes in the Daisenberger text. Speaking of the latter text, Schwaighofer indicated that the text is so saturated with anti-Semitism that changes would not really modify the negative impact of the play. He thought that the concept of an extended prologue or epilogue would be a useful thing, but that the major effort needed was to secure a change from the Daisenberger text to the Rosner text.

Both Schwaighofer and Lang expressed the view that they had gotten no assistance from Cardinal Ratzinger in Munich, and reported that all of their communications to the Cardinal on this subject have remained unanswered. It was also their view that it might not be unlikely that their requests for assistance have never been placed before him. They felt strongly that if the church took a firm stand on the issue important changes could be brought about. When we advised them that Seminar members would be meeting with Vatican officials, they urged us to raise this problem with them and to solicit their assistance.

(over)

Anton Preisinger, the Producer

A small group from the Seminar met with Anton Preisinger and Herr Noth Mr. Preisinger was animated and outspoken assuring the group that there was no intent to perpetuate anti-Semitism and that if our group could show him where the script contained any anti-Semitism he would make changes in the production. When questions were raised as to script changes and possible production changes he responded by stating, to make major changes would be like asking them to produce "Flying Down to Rio." In any case he did indicate a willingness to be open to new materials and possible script changes, as well as to examine the proposed prologue materials left with the mayor. Our group promised to send him as quickly as possible a critique of the specific aspects of the script which we believe to be anti-Semitic and not in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines.

Vatican Secretariat on Relations With The Jews

On Wednesday, May 10, in Rome, our group met with Monsignor Moeller and Father Jorge Mejia to discuss a wide range of concerns including a brief report on our trip at which time the subject of Oberammergau and the Passion Play was raised. Both Father Mejia and Monsignor Moeller expressed surprise over our concern with the play indicating that the last they had been informed was that there had been a text change and that the problem had been resolved. We detailed for them that in fact changes had not been made and that those who were leaders of the movement for change felt abandoned by the church. Father Mejia stated that it was ADL's responsibility to provide him with as much information as possible on our meeting with the people in Oberammergau and that Vatican II and the Guidelines (promulgated in 1975) stated quite clearly that Jews were not to be treated as a rejected people or a deicide people, and the play violated these principles.

Father Mejia indicated that Bishop Flugel of Regensburg, Bavaria, who is a member of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews and is close to Bavarian officials, should be involved in this particular problem. Father Mejia also indicated that he works closely with Cardinal Ratzinger and that he would have occasion to discuss this problem with him. As we concluded this portion of our discussion Father Mejia requested that we prepare a memorandum for him with background information on the matter with supportive quotations from the various texts and such other materials as we believed appropriate for his follow-up.

Upon our return to the United States, the following National Catholic News Service Release was received. (See attached)

While all of us realize that Passion Plays by their nature carry the roots of anti-Semitism, we can be justifiably proud of what we must recognize as an important breakthrough with the leadership of a community which is, in the eyes of the world, synonymous with Passion Plays. Obviously this represents important progress. Further progress may be slow to develop but we trust this signals a beginning

religious communities Vestments, chalices, altar linens Stations of the Cross and other liturgical furnishings costing \$17,270 were provided and \$151,800 was used to support a variety of local activities in mission areas

The \$4.5 million budget for the fiscal year from March 1, 1978, to Feb. 28, 1979, lists \$1 million earmarked for special diocesan aid, \$900,000 for chapel-catechetical center building, \$600,000 each for mission priest and Religious subsidy campus ministry and mission catechetical and religious education, \$300,000 for missionary seminarian education, \$275,000 for Mass offerings, \$200,000 for miscellaneous aid, and \$25,000 for liturgical furnishings

The Catholic Church Extension Society has been raising funds for home missions since 1905 through individual contributions and through annuities, bequests, burses, life insurance policies, real estate, securities and trust arrangements

10 - 5/12/78

PASSION PLAY WILL HAVE DRASTIC CHANGES, PRODUCER SAYS (510)

OBERRAMMERGAU, West Germany (NC) — The new producer of the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play announced May 10 that "drastic changes" will be made in the Daisenberger version of the play

The play, put on for a year every decade in the small Bavarian town of Oberammergau, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic

Hans Maier, 52-year-old woodcutter-producer of the play, said that the 1980 production will be made to conform "as far as possible" with the orientations of the Second Vatican Council regarding Christian-Jewish relations

The announcement came only days after a 16-member delegation of American Jews, officials of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, held talks with Oberammergau leaders

The group called for changes in the script

Maier said that sections in the prologue assigning collective guilt for Jesus' death to the Jews would be cut

He also promised that a scene in which the temple merchant's plot revenge against Jesus for cleansing the temple precincts would be revised

Maier said that he is shortening the play by one hour and designing a new set

The producer added that the team doing the text revisions would include persons who do not reside in Oberammergau, but he did not reveal the names of the group members

For more than three centuries Oberammergauers have staged a Passion Play every tenth year as a result of a vow made during the Thirty Years' War when the village was spared from a plague sweeping Europe

Over the years different scripts have been used. The Daisenberger version was written for the 1860 production and has been in use since

As a result of criticisms in the 1960s, several anti-Semitic references were dropped or changed when the play was staged in 1970. But Jewish leaders and Catholics concerned about anti-Semitism in Catholic thought, literature and culture argued that the changes did not go far enough

Oberammergau, like the rest of Bavaria, is predominantly Catholic. The play, fulfilling a religious vow, has always been considered a Catholic religious play, not just a secular dramatic production with a religious theme.

In recent years opponents of the play's anti-Semitic tones have focused especially on the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" to argue against passages in the play which suggest that Jews are responsible for Christ's death.

The council's declaration said that "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion. The Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture."

Critics of the Daisenberger version drew further ammunition in the last several years from the Vatican's 1974 guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations, which expanded on the principles of the 1965 declaration and encouraged efforts to eliminate anti-Semitic tendencies at every level of Catholic life.

The debate over the play has deeply divided Oberammergauers. It was the main issue in town council elections this spring, in which supporters of the traditional version soundly defeated reformists who wanted to substitute a completely different text.





NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, June 13...."Drastic changes" will be made in the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play to conform with the 1974 Vatican guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations and "reconcile with the Jews...without falsification of the Bible."

The announcement, made in an Oberammergau news release published in two German newspapers -- the Frankfurter Allgemeine-Zeitung (May 13) and the Frankfurter Rundschau (May 31) -- and the Catholic News Service (May 12), credited the changes to recommendations made by a delegation of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith leaders which met with officials of the Bavarian town last month (May 5).

Among the ADL suggestions being followed are: an expanded prologue explicitly stating that the Jews are not to be considered collectively guilty for Jesus' death; revision or elimination of scenes which depict Jews in an unnecessarily harsh way, and the addition of Jews calling for the release of Jesus to the highly emotional scene in which the masses call for his death.

The changes, announced by Hans Maier, a 52-year-old Oberammergau woodcutter who is the newly-elected director of the Passion Play, will be made in the 1980 production. The play, put on for 12 months every

(more)

decade for the past 300 years, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic.

The ADL delegation, led by Nat Kameny, chairman of the national human relations agency's program committee; Rabbi Ronald B. Sobel, vice chairman, and Theodore Freedman, director of the program division, met with Oberammergau Mayor Ernest Zwink, other town leaders, and later in Rome discussed the meetings with members of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews. They were assured by Father Gorges Mejia, secretary of the Commission, that he would give the recommendations made by ADL in Oberammergau to Bishop Carl B. Flugel, Regensburg, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Munich, both in Bavaria.

Mr. Kameny said that Mayor Zwink and other Oberammergau town officials, while knowledgeable about the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," seemed unfamiliar with the 1975 Vatican Guidelines which were adopted to implement it. The Guidelines, following the principles of the Declaration which said "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion...the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or cursed as if this followed from Holy Scripture," encouraged efforts to eliminate anti-Semitic tendencies at every level of Catholic life.

The ADL group made clear to the Oberammergau officials, Mr. Kameny went on to say, that "while we were aware of the current controversy in Oberammergau over two different Passion Play texts, we were not advocating one over the other." The group gave as ADL's concern the impact of all Passion Plays.

"We pointed out," Mr. Kameny said, "that deletions could be made in whichever text was used to remove segments referring to Jews and Judaism in a prejudicial way and in contradiction to the Vatican's Declaration and Guidelines."

Commending the Oberammergau announcement of change in the prologue and the play itself as "an important breakthrough on a vital issue which has disturbed the American and world Jewish communities for many years," he said "although progress has been slow, it is to be hoped that the new understanding we found in Oberammergau signals a speeding up of the process." ADL will follow through with its promise to Mayor Zwink to send related materials and suggestions for possible additional modifications in the play.

As a result of criticisms in the 1960's, several anti-Semitic references in the Oberammergau Passion Play were dropped or changed when the play was staged in 1970. But Jews, as well as Catholics concerned about anti-Semitism in Catholic thought, literature and culture, did not think the changes went far enough. Oberammergau, like the rest of Bavaria, is predominantly Catholic. The play has always been considered a Catholic religious play, not just a secular dramatic production with a religious theme.

The Anti-Defamation League delegation was in Oberammergau as part of a 14-day international, interreligious seminar in Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The group conferred with Jewish, Christian and political leaders in the three countries on problems related to anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, education about the Holocaust and Jewish-

(more)

Christian relations. At a private audience with Pope Paul VI, ADL leaders presented the Pontiff with the ten millionth copy of the agency's 16-page publication, "The Record - The Holocaust in History -- 1933-1945," which appeared as an insert in 35 major American newspapers and is being used as an educational tool by American public and parochial schools.



BHR, BHFOR, AJ, CP, RE, RTVF, C-78

Th - 20
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1) WLD - ...
2) ...
3) Bislin - SEIT, / KATZENBERG CONFIDENTIAL

To: Bert Gold and Miles Jaffe (4) ZWINT

From: Marc Tanenbaum

DATE July 21, 1978

RE: MEETINGS IN MUNICH JULY 19-21 RE OBERAMMERGAU

This is a preliminary report in summary form of the major developments that emerged out of our several meetings in Munich this week. Bill Trusten will be returning from Oberammergau to New York next Wednesday and will augment this report with his own.

In the main, this was an extremely useful trip, and, as will be indicated below, could be of potentially far-reaching, constructive importance on a number of levels.

Our first meeting took place ^{from 2-5.30 p.m.} in a conference room at the Vier Jahreszeiten hotel in Munich. There was in attendance an interesting mixture of groups:

a) A delegation ^{of four people} from Oberammergau, headed by Dr. Hans Schwarzhofen, OPP director. [Dr. Alois Fink, OPP editor, had a week-long assignment in Wiesbaden and could not be present]

b) Johannes Berger, political-cultural editor of the major daily of Munich, The Sudetsche Zeitung, Berger, an impressive intelligence in his mid-thirties, who has written numerous pro-Rosner articles and editorials, ^{who} emerged as a key affirmative influence in the discussions.

c) Rev. Sanders, an articulate Catholic priest deeply engaged in promoting Catholic-Jewish relations in Bavaria;

d) Mr. Stoltz, a ^{radio} correspondent commentator for Bavarian Radio, thoughtful and helpful to us in the manner of journalist Berger.

e) Karl Koepcke of Lufthansa, who played his usual supportive role. [Bill Trusten will supply a complete list of names and titles].

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE PASSION PLAY - Schwarzhofen reported that probably 70% of Oberammergau's population is pro-Darsenberger

check spelling

for both practical and "ideological" reasons. There are about 420 people who presently support the Rosner version. On the basis of a German version of the AJC study of the text, and our last letter to the Burger initiative group which summarized our objections to Daisenberg, the OPP group said, Mayor Zwituk and the Gemeinderat assigned Hans Maier, the new editor, to revise Daisenberg, so that it would conform as much as possible to Vatican Council II teachings.

Interestingly, throughout the entire three-and-a-half hour discussion not a single reference was made to the ADL delegation's visit in May, nor to any ADL documents.

The OPP delegation unanimously felt that it was impossible to rectify the anti-Semitic structure of Daisenberg and changes would only be cosmetic. Meanwhile, the Rosner group continues to work on their production, performing and refining scenes. They are still counting on the Daisenberg text to fail, and they plan to have their play ready as a substitute.

The OPP group strongly resents the ~~stragg~~^{straddling} of the issue by Cardinal Ratzinger, and the silence of the Bavarian Conference of Bishops. They feel that had the Cardinal and the Bishops supported the Rosner group, there would be no question that they would prevail.

It is important for us to realize that during these months of polemic, the Daisenberg group has succeeded in portraying the Rosner group as "lapsed Catholics" (or ^{lapsed} Christians), who are not "from" and don't go to Church. As became clear during our meeting on Thursday, 3 p.m., with Bishop Schwarzenbock, the "unfrumkeit" of ^{many of} the Rosner group could become an important factor in the Church's position in the months ahead. We will have to deal with the problem of a coalition of "lapsed Christians" and "auslander Juden" trying to change the traditional Passover Play.

Nevertheless, however the final decision turns out, these significant developments did take place:

1) Several of the Rosner group at our meeting, said that although they obviously favor the Rosner version, they know at practically nothing about Jews, Judaism, and the history of anti-Semitism. They ~~also~~ said that the overwhelming majority of the townspeople are in the identical state of ignorance and illiteracy about Jews. They literally pleaded with

Bill and me to help them meet this need - to send them written materials in German and possibly to bring a ^{Jewish} lecturer to Oberammergau, for a series of talks on these subjects. Bill and I responded that AJC will certainly try to, be as helpful as possible, and they would hear from us following our return. It was said, inter alia, that even though that might not influence the 1980 decision, it could be very important for the future; it would certainly be unprecedented for Oberammergau, and we agreed.

2) In response to a statement I made that the time has come "to move from polemics to dialogue" - deep and serious communication about the fundamental historic and theological issues that Oberammergau represents, Johannes Berger proposed that Bill and I meet with the leaders of the Bavarian Catholic Academy to explore the possibility of their sponsoring a seminar on these themes.

We responded affirmatively, and Berger immediately arranged an appointment for us the next morning with the President of the Academy, Prof. Henrich, and four faculty members (one of whom was a Lutheran scholar.) It turns out that the Bavarian Academy is the most prestigious academic institution of the Catholic Church in Bavaria, its theological Brookings Institute.

After an excellent, high-level discussion that lasted through lunch, President Henrich acted at once to sponsor the Institute. Its theme would be, "The Passion of Jesus - Yesterday and Today." Papers would be presented by major

Catholic and Jewish scholars on Biblical, Historical, and Theological aspects of the Passover story, as well as on "Their Current Implications for Anti-Semitism Today and for Jewish-Christian Relations".

Nov. 11-12, 1978 were proposed as dates. The conference would be held at the Ettal Monastery school, four kilometres from Oberammergau. Some 200-300 key people from Oberammergau would be invited to attend, from both Darsenberger and Rosner camps. The Bavarian Academy will pay all expenses for travel, bourseaux, room and board. They would want three or four scholars from the United States to discuss "The Meaning of Oberammergau in the United States." They will welcome our co-sponsorship, but will also want possibly a "religious" partner. (In the past, they sponsored similar institutes with Hebrew University, with Prof. Shmaryahu Talmon, Zvi Wershborsky, Shlomo Ben-Choron as participants.) They may need some financial aid from AIC to help cover the American involvement.

Needless to say, Paul and I regarded this development as a major breakthrough, and we would like to discuss this with you as soon as possible.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date September 20, 1978
to Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
from William S. Trosten
subject

Yesterday, I spoke to Dr. Scherer of the Catholic Academy in Bavaria. A definite date for the Symposium has been set -- November 11th and 12th. Because of technical problems, the Symposium cannot be held in Ettal but will take place in the Academy in Munich.

The Academy is currently finalizing the agenda and securing speakers. Professor Franz Mussner has agreed to participate. The rest of the speakers are not yet definite. They would like very much to have Professor Talmun participate but it is their understanding that the dates are inconvenient for him.

They would welcome and are awaiting recommendations for scholars and theologians to participate or simply be invited to the Symposium. They are particularly interested in our recommendations for a speaker who can deal with the following agenda item: "The Possibilities and Limitations of The Dramatic Portrayal of The Passion of Jesus."

As soon as the agenda is completed, they will forward it.

They plan to invite members of the press as well as representatives of Oberammergau to the Symposium and the proceedings will be published.

continued....

In the meantime, Schwaighofer has confirmed the interest of Arbeitsgemeinschaft in a discussion of Jewish history and the history of anti-Semitism. I have suggested to Schwaighofer that this meeting in Oberammergau be held on the evening of November 13th.

Copies of my letters to Schwaighofer and Hannes Burger are attached. I will write to Scherer as soon as you give me the list of invitees and participants.

I suggest that we get together as soon as possible to discuss the Symposium and, perhaps, even more importantly, the meeting in Oberammergau.

WST/BJB
atts.

cc: Bertram H. Gold
Miles Jaffe



American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.

4/2/78

Herrn
Bürgermeister
Ernst Zwink
Ettaler-Straße 12
8103 Oberammergau

Dear Mayor Zwink,

On our last visit to Oberammergau we regretted that time and circumstances prevented our meeting and talking with more people. On this winter visit, we were pleased to have had the opportunity to speak with you at such length. Your willingness to give us so much of your time and to share your thoughts with us was most appreciated.

The achievement of Oberammergau in its history of production of the Passion Play is the greater because it is the creation of the village. We understand the importance of that fact not only to the village itself but also to the great audience which every ten years looks to you for artistic and religious inspiration.

Our interest and concern stems from an appreciation of one part of that audience, the United States. We also know that the views of that audience, are widely shared in other Countries. Especially since we have enjoyed your hospitality, experienced the beauty of your village and its mountains, been warmed by the courtesy of your people and witnessed the artist~~ic~~ of your Play, we feel we must share with you our concern with the impact your choice between Daisenberger and Rosner will have at home.

In the last ten years, American views of interreligious harmony have moved, in many areas from tolerance to understanding and mutual respect. In that process even theology has changed. Christians have recognized that historic views of the relationship between Jews and the crucifixion of Jesus are not only historically inaccurate but have been responsible for much of the anti-Semitism which has disfigured the Christian image. The decisions of Vatican Council II in this respect have been not only accepted but gratefully welcomed. It has resulted in increased understanding not only between Jews and Protestants, Evangelicals and all of the Christian denominations. We believe that public opinion will no longer tolerate any religious message centered on the theme that Jews as a people bear any historic guilt or collective responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus. The merest inferences of such a relationship have been met by universal expressions of outrage. Similarly, the production in Oberammergau of a Passion Play

that is seen to carry that message will not be accepted by any responsible segment of public opinion.

Such a production, we believe, will not be met with silence nor with passivity, but with active expressions of public outrage. Such expressions cannot but affect the willingness of Americans and others to view what they should otherwise be eager to see.

But American reaction, we believe, may not merely affect patronage of the Passion Play and the desire to visit Oberammergau. The German experience and achievement in recent years has been much admired and applauded in our country as well as in other Western nations. But it is unfortunately true that suspicions and doubts about the depth and duration of democratic values in your country remain. We fear that reaction to your decision will not only directly affect opinion about Oberammergau but will also reflect on Germany as a whole. This may be true even though German opinion and press have welcomed the possibility of production of the Rosner text.

We have read both the Daisenberger and Rosner texts of the Passion Play and have seen your trial production of the Rosner. We cannot express too strongly our conclusion that central to Daisenberger is the theme of collective Jewish guilt for the death of Jesus. We are certain that no deletions, no omissions, no editing, no tricks of stagecraft can disguise that theme. Daisenberger will be seen as an anti-Semitic expression in our country and elsewhere, and will be denounced and scorned as such.

We would oppose any attempt to make your Passion Play anything other than an expression of the artistry and religious convictions of Oberammergau. The fact that it is your creation gives it much of its beauty, power and importance. Because we are dedicated in our opposition to the concept of collective guilt, whether Jews or Bavarian villagers, and because we have come to know you as friends, we hope you will accept our desire simply to inform you of one of the implications of the choice before you. Your right to produce Daisenberger cannot be denied. The certainty and strength of the result of such a choice in America and in other countries cannot be avoided. We hope that for your and ^{our} yours, your choice will express the warmth and respect which we have felt with you.

Sincerely yours,

Miles Jaffe

National Chairman
Interreligious Affairs Commission

William S. Trosten

Director of Development

Rabbi Mave H. Tanenbaum

National Director
Interreligious Affairs Department

KATHOLISCHE AKADEMIE IN BAYERN

SYMPOSIUM ON "THE PASSION OF JESUS - THEN AND NOW"

AMERICAN JEWISH
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 1978
ARCHIVES

A PAPER BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, NATIONAL INTERRELIGIOUS
AFFAIRS DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
ON THE THEME

"THE ROLE OF THE PASSION PLAY IN FOSTERING ANTI-SEMITISM
THROUGHOUT HISTORY"

PRESENTED IN GERMAN BY MR. WILLIAM TROSTEN OF THE AMERICAN
JEWISH COMMITTEE, NEW YORK CITY.

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- I - THE HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE PASSION PLAY
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- III - THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PASSION PLAY TO THE CURRENT
RELIGIOUS CLIMATE
- IV - THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF ARTISTIC PORTRAYALS
OF THE PASSION OF JESUS



I - THE HISTORIC BACKGROUND OF THE PASSION PLAY

According to The New Catholic Encyclopedia (published under the Imprimatur of His Eminence Patrick Cardinal O'Boyle, Washington, D. C., 1967), the Passion Play was a genre of medieval religious drama, of relatively late and slow development, which concentrated on the suffering, death, and Resurrection of Christ, and was thus distinguished from the Corpus Christi cycles narrating the entire Biblical story from Creation to Judgement

In their major study, A History of the Theater, George Freedley and John A. Reeves (Crown Publisher, N.Y., 1955) assert that the ecclesiastical drama began with the elaboration of the Mass itself and seems to have come about first in France. There liturgical dramas were called mystères (mysteries), in Italy they were the sacre rappresentazioni, in England, miracle plays (sometimes called mystery plays); in Germany, Geistspiele.

The dramas of the period were based on "the holy mysteries of the Bible," hence their names mystery plays. The miracles were taken from the events in the lives of the saints, though by the fourteenth century the two were used interchangeably in ordinary speech.

Alongside the mysteries and miracles there existed the moralities, which contrary to popular belief were contemporaries and not successors of the already described forms. Though the word "morality" was not in use at the time, this form was generally termed "moral," "goodly," or "pithy Interlude." The first of which we have knowledge is the Play of the Lord's Prayer which was performed in York before 1384 and until 1582.

The seven vices of Pride, Lust, Sloth, Gluttony, Hatred, Avarice and Anger were portrayed for the instruction of the auditors. The characters in these plays were allegorical and in some instances derived from miracles though they existed along with the liturgical drama.

It is held by scholars that there were no dramatic representations of Christ's death until the early 13th century, when all other types of liturgical play had long been performed. That may very well mean that there was a reluctance in the medieval Catholic church to imitate in a fictive manner "the awesome mystery of Christ's sacrifice, especially since the Mass as the central act of liturgy was itself the actual continuation of that sacrifice." (NCE, p. 1062)

During the 12th century, however, the custom of chanting a long, lyrical planctus, or lament, of the Blessed Virgin became attached to the Good Friday veneration of the cross. The latter ceremony already included the choral singing of the Improperia, or Reproaches of Jesus, (to which references in terms of attitudes toward Jews, Judaism, and the Synagogue will be made later in this paper) and the uncovering of a veiled crucifix with the words "Ecce lignum crucis." In addition to impersonations by clerics of the voices of the Sorrowful Mother, of Christ, or of John, chanting and rubrics of stylized gestures eventually appeared, and such activity was regarded by Karl Young as "genuine Passion drama."

The only extant texts of Passion plays in Latin are the two in the Benediktbeuern MS from the 13th century, and their form suggests a development rather by elaboration of the already existing liturgical plays than by accretion to dramatic lyric, sermon, or narrative poem. The

early vernacular Passion plays belong to the turn of the 14th century in both Germany and France. The typical plan of the vernacular Passion drama is a threefold design:

The Fall (of the Angels and of Man), the suffering of Christ, and finally the Resurrection.

This plan omits virtually all of the Old Testament history except the original sin of Adam and Eve and ordinarily does not include the nativity of Jesus. The life of Christ is taken up at the beginning of his public ministry or at his triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The earliest surviving German Passion play is found in a St. Gall MS., undated but probably of the early 14th century. Its span of sacred history extends from the marriage feast of Cana to the Resurrection. Of comparable date is the Vienna play, which adds to the St. Gall pattern the narrative of Adam's Fall, thus presenting for the first time the triptych effect of the usual Passion play. Perhaps the most notable feature of the St. Gall text is the presence of a prologue in the voice of St. Augustine, a trace thus appearing of the famous Prophet plays, in which the Church Father summoned a procession of witnesses to the Messiah. Augustine also serves as a commentator in the play, at times interrupting to give a brief outline of coming action and at other times to give a little homily based on a scene just concluded, such as an exhortation to humility after Jesus washed the feet of the Disciples.

The flowering of German Passion plays occurred in the 15th and 16th centuries, which witnessed the expansion of the texts to many thousands of lines and thus to an action requiring 3 days for performance. Among the group of plays that survived this period are the Frankfurt and the Tyrol texts.

The nucleus of the Frankfurt group of plays is the Dirigierrolle, which reveals in skeletal form a very extensive undertaking, from a Prophet play to an Ascension scene, climaxed by an epilogue debate between the allegorical figures Ecclesia and Synagoga. The Frankfurt Passion Play in its turn has served as a point of departure for other Passion plays performed in the same general area, of which the best known are the Alsfeld and the Heidelberg texts. These texts exist in MSS. written shortly after 1500, and the great length of the scenes is attributed to "the loquacity of the characters, which has grown immeasurably from the cryptic speeches in the early plays, and also to the lavish use of comic motifs." (NCE, p. 1063.)

The presence of buffoonery is quite marked in these southwestern German plays, notably in the scenes of merry devils, of Mary Magdalene's worldly life, and even of the counting out and quarreling over Judas' 30 silver coins. Allegory also is used, sparingly but effectively, e.g., in the Heidelberg personification of Death as summoner of Lazarus; Death boasts ironically of his unlimited power and then suffers humiliation in his defeat by Christ's miracle at Lazarus' tomb (John 11:1-46). Also noteworthy in this text is the juxtaposition of prefigurative scenes from the Old Testament immediately before the corresponding events of the New Testament related typologically to them (Thus the acquittal of Susanna by Daniel (Daniel ch. 13) is staged as a prelude to Christ's encounter with the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11) This method of structuring TYPE and ANTITYPE in sacred history is not widespread in drama. The much later Oberammergau play has something akin this arrangement in a series of tableaux vivants from prefigurative Old Testament events preceding each New Testament scene.

The Tyrol Passion plays from the Eastern Alpine region are distinguished from other German texts by a greater selectivity of incident and by a uniformly elevated tone. Omitting Old Testament material, they begin late in the life of Jesus, with the council of "the Jews" plotting his death.

(The most characteristic plays of the German stage were the Shrove-tide plays, Fastnachtspiel, which centered in Nuremberg, the center of learning and industry throughout the medieval period as well as during the Renaissance. The subject matter was similar to the French farces except for the representation of the peasants in a coarse and ugly light, their virtue and bravery always being subject to crude questioning. The fact that these plays were always written by townsfolk may explain the dislike, distrust, and ridicule heaped upon the country people.)

Passion plays on French soil reveal much the same history as do those in Germany. The early vernacular texts are of Burgundian provenance and are all related ultimately to the nondramatic narrative poem, Passion des Jongleurs, written c. 1200.

The really great French Passion plays are those of Eustache Mercadé and Arnoul Greban, both 15th century dramatists, whose gigantic plays were subject to revision and adaptation by later writers, most skillfully by Jean Michel. These French mysteres show divergence from the standard German design, although they omit most of the Old Testament narrative, they do include the Nativity and the early life of Jesus. Moreover, they envelop the titanic serial narrative in a unifying framework known as the Proces de Paradis, quite different from the German forms of prophetic prologue and Augustinian commentary.

THE PROCÈS DE PARADIS IS A DRAMATIZATION OF THE DEBATE AMONG RIGHTEOUSNESS, MERCY, TRUTH, AND PEACE AT THE THRONE OF GOD, ALLEGORIZING THE CONFLICT BETWEEN HIS JUSTICE AND HIS MERCY. The allegorized virtues, known in homiletic literature as the Four Daughters of God, are reconciled only when the Second Person of the Trinity undertakes to expiate man's sin; they reappear at intervals in the long cycle, most notably at the return of Christ to heaven, when Justice (Righteousness) at first sulks in a corner but then in a dramatic capitulation accepts the satisfaction made by Jesus.

Performances of Passion plays continued long into modern times. The Catholic Encyclopedia describes the Oberammergau Passion Play as "one of the German dramas still flourishing in a regular presentation every 10th year." The origin of this custom is a well-known series of events related to the Thirty Years' War of the early 17th century. During the devastation of the Bavarian countryside by Swedish troops in 1632, a severe outbreak of the plague occurred, first in the lowlands, spreading gradually to the upland villages, including Oberammergau. After months of such disaster, the town council of this devout Catholic village decided upon a vow; they would sacrifice a year in every decade to the presentation of a Passion play. This promise was made by all the villagers for themselves and their descendants, as an act of penance and petition for deliverance; it is the Oberammergau tradition that no one died of the plague after this solemn religious act.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

All surveys of the historic evolution of Passion Plays that we have consulted suggest a number of conclusions that affect our approach to the 1980 version of the Oberammergau Passion Play.

of incident and...a uniformly elevated tone."

4) The New Catholic Encyclopedia's scholars describe the French mystères as "the really great French Passion plays...which show divergence from the standard German design" in that the Procès de Paradis dramatizes the Passion of Jesus in the form of a debate among the allegorized virtues, Righteousness, Mercy, Truth, and Peace at the Throne of God, allegorizing the spiritual message of the Passion as the conflict between His Justice and His Mercy. Is the Daisenberger text or the Rosner text of the Oberammergau Passion closer to this expression of authentic spirituality which precludes the singling out of "the Jews" as the enemies of God and the murderers of Christ collectively guilty as deicides, and therefore subject to eternal punishment?

II - THE ROLE OF THE PASSION PLAY IN FOSTERING ANTI-SEMITISM THROUGHOUT HISTORY

The Dark Ages of Jewish history in Western Europe date from the First Crusade (1096), which began and ended with a massacre. "The men who took the cross," wrote Lord Acton, "after receiving communion, heartily devoted the day to the extermination of the Jews." They killed about ten thousand Jewish people.

When Godfrey of Bouillon, in the summer of 1099, succeeded after a heroic assault in capturing Jerusalem, he spent the first week slaughtering the inhabitants. The Jews were shut up in their Synagogue, which was then set on fire. According to the Roman Catholic historian, Malcolm Hay, in his book, Europe and the Jews, (Beacon Press, Boston, 1960, pp. 37 ff.), Godfrey wrote to the Pope, "Learn that in the Porch and in the Temple of Solomon, our people had the vile blood of the Saracens up to the knees of their horses." And then, said Michelet, sweeping aside the glamor and piety, "and then, when they thought the Savior had been sufficiently

In the eyes of the crusading pauperes, Prof. Cohn writes, the smiting of Moslems and the Jews was to be the first act in that final battle which was to culminate in the smiting of the Prince of Evil himself. Above these desperate hordes, as they moved about their work of massacre, there loomed the figure of the Antichrist. As the infidels were allotted their roles in the eschatological drama, popular imagination transformed them into demons. But if the Saracen long retained in the popular imagination a certain demonic quality, the Jews was portrayed as an even more horrifying figure. Jews and Saracens were generally regarded as closely akin, if not identical, but since Jews lived scattered through Christian Europe, they came to occupy by far the larger part in popular demonology. Moreover they occupied it for much longer - with consequences, Dr. Cohn states, which have extended down the generations and which include the massacre of millions of European Jews in mid-twentieth century.

Based on his detailed historic and theological studies, Prof. Cohn asserts that "official Catholic teaching had prepared the way" for establishing the demonic image of the Jew which dominated the imagination of large parts of the Christian masses in the Middle Ages and beyond. Catholic historian Malcolm Hay similarly declares, "The machinery of propaganda was entirely in the hands of the Church officials - preaching, chronicles, mystery plays, and even ecclesiastical ceremonies were the principal agencies available for the dissemination of hate. Preachers dwelt with a morbid and sometimes sadistic realism upon the physical sufferings of Christ, for which they blamed all Jews of the time and all their descendants. For many centuries the Bishops of Beziers preached a series of sermons during Holy Week, urging their congregations to take vengeance on the Jews who lived in the district; stoning them became a regular part of the Holy Week ceremonial."

revenged, that is to say, when there was hardly anyone left alive in the town, they went with tears to worship at the Holy Sepulchre."

The peculiarly intense and unremitting hatred which in Christendom - and only in Christendom - has been directed against Jewry above all other "outgroups" can be accounted for, according to both Christian and Jewish scholars, "by the wholly phantastic image of the Jews which suddenly gripped the imagination of the new masses at the time of the first crusades."

In his landmark study, The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Messianism in Medieval and Reformation Europe and its Bearing on Modern Totalitarian Movements (Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1961), Prof. Norman Cohn observes

"According to the Johannine and Sibylline traditions alike, before the Millennium could dawn, misbelief had to be eliminated. In a sense the ideal of a wholly Christian world is of course as old as Christianity itself. Nevertheless Christianity had usually remained, as it was at its origin, a missionary religion which had insisted that the elimination of misbelievers must be achieved through their conversion. The messianic hordes which began to form in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, on the other hand, saw no reason at all why that elimination could not equally well be achieved by the physical annihilation of the unconverted. In the Chanson de Roland, the famous epic which is the most impressive literary embodiment of the spirit of the First Crusade, the new attitude is expressed quite unambiguously

'The Emperor has taken Saragossa. A thousand Franks are sent to search thoroughly the town, the mosques and synagogues...The King believes in God, he desires to serve him. His bishops bless the water and the heathen are brought to the baptistry. If any one of them resists Charlemagne, the King has him hanged or burnt to death or slain with the sword.'

The Church, Prof. Cohn observes, had always tended to regard the Synagogue as a dangerous influence and even as a potential rival and had never ceased to carry on a vigorous polemic against Judaism. For generations the laity had been accustomed to hear the Jews bitterly condemned from the pulpit - as perverse, stubborn and ungrateful because they refused to admit the divinity of Christ, as bearers also of a monstrous hereditary guilt for the murder of Christ. Moreover the eschatological tradition had long associated the Jews with Antichrist himself.

Already in the second and third centuries theologians were foretelling that Antichrist would be a Jew of the tribe of Dan. Born at Babylon, he would grow up in Palestine and would love the Jews above all peoples, he would rebuild the Temple for them and gather them together from their dispersion. The Jews for their part would be the most faithful followers of Antichrist, accepting him as the Messiah who was to restore the nation. And if some theologians looked forward to a general conversion of the Jews, others maintained that their blindness would endure to the end and that at the Last Judgment they would be sent, along with Antichrist himself, to suffer the torments of Hell for all eternity. In the compendium of Antichrist-lore which Adso of Montier-en-Der produced in the tenth century and which remained the stock authority throughout the Middle Ages, Antichrist, while remaining a Jew of the tribe of Dan, has become still more uncanny and sinister. Now he is to be the offspring of a harlot and a worthless wretch and moreover at the moment of his conception the Devil is to enter the harlot's womb as a spirit, thereby ensuring that the child shall be the very incarnation of Evil. Later, his education in Palestine is to be carried out by sorcerers and magicians, who will initiate him into the black art and witchery.

Significantly, when the old eschatological prophecies were taken up by the masses of the later Middle Ages, all these phantasies were treated with deadly seriousness and elaborated into a weird mythology. For just as the human figure of Antichrist tended to merge into the wholly demonic figure of Satan, so the Jews tended to be seen as demons attendant on Satan. In medieval drama, some passion plays, and picture, they were often shown as devils with the beard and horns of a goat, while in real life ecclesiastical and secular authorities alike tried to make them wear horns on their hats. Like other demons, they were imagined and portrayed in close association creatures which symbolize lust and dirt - horned beasts, pigs, frogs, worms, snakes and scorpions. Conversely Satan himself was commonly given Jewish features and was referred to as "the father of the Jews." The populace was convinced that in the synagogue Jews worshipped Satan in the form of a cat or a toad, invoking his aid in making black magic. Like their supposed master, Jews were thought of as demons of destruction whose one object was the ruin of Christians and Christendom - "dyables d'enfer, enemys du genre humain," as they were called in French miracle plays.

And if the power of the Jews seemed greater than ever, their evil-doing more outrageous, their sorceries more baleful, that was but one more sign that the End was indeed at hand. Even the ten lost tribes of Israel, whom Commodianus had seen as the future army of Christ, became identified with those hosts of Antichrist, the peoples of Gog and Magog - peoples whom the Pseudo-Methodius described as living off human flesh, corpses, babes ripped from their mothers' wombs, and also off scorpions, serpents and all the most disgusting reptiles. Medieval dramas were written showing how the Jewish demons would help Antichrist to conquer the world until, on the eve

of the Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennium, Antichrist and Jews would be annihilated together amidst the rejoicings of the Christians. During the performance of such works armed force was needed to protect the Jewish quarter from the fury of the mob. Popes and Councils might insist that, although the Jews ought to be isolated and degraded until the day of their conversion, they must certainly not be killed - subtleties such as these made little impression on turbulent masses swept by eschatological hopes and fears and already, as they thought, embarked on the prodigious struggles of the Last Days.

Hatred of the Jews has so often been attributed to their role as money-lenders that it is worth emphasizing how slight the connection really was. The phantasy of the demonic Jews existed before the reality of the Jewish money-lender, whom indeed it helped to produce by debarring Jews from any gainful economic, civil, or military functions through exclusionary civic and ecclesiastical laws.

When Bernard, Abbot of Clairvaux, was commissioned by Pope Eugenius III in 1145 to preach the Second Crusade, he gained many recruits by announcing that the killing of an infidel would merit a place in heaven. Rudolph, or Ralph, a Cistercian monk who left his monastery at Clairvaux in order to enlist recruits in Germany for the rescue of the Holy Land, told the German masses it was their duty first to kill the enemies of Christ in their own country. Ralph told his congregations that these infidels, violent men, and well armed, were a long way off, and that it was much safer, and equally meritorious to kill unarmed Jews at home. The doctrine was readily accepted by the populace, whose minds for generations, says Malcolm Hay, had been prepared for such ideas by ecclesiastical propaganda. The massacre began, without regard to age or sex, at Spire, Cologne, Mainz, and many other cities in Germany. "Many ecclesiastical

historians," writes Malcolm Hay, "have treated the whole affair (of the massacre of the Jews in Germany) as if it had been merely an unfortunate incident, due to the ignorant fanaticism of single individuals and not as in fact it was characteristic and inevitable in the world of the twelfth century," and subsequent centuries.

That demonology which has fixed the image of the Jews as Antichrist in popular Christian eschatology has persisted to modern times in Germany and elsewhere. In her classic study, The War Against the Jews, 1939-1945, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1975), Dr. Lucy Dawidowicz observes: (p. 9)

"Between 1907 and 1910 Lanz von Liebenfels, an eccentric occultist-racist, published a series of pamphlets - which Adolf Hitler bought and read - called Ostara: Briefbücherei der blonden Mannesrechtler (Newsletter of the Blond Champions of Man's Rights), in which he depicted the struggle between blond Aryan heroes and the dark, hairy ape-men who represent the lower races. All human existence revolved around this struggle, whose central burden was to preserve the purity of Aryan women from the demonic sexuality of the ape-man"

Dr. Dawidowicz continues: (p. 10):

"People living in an anti-Semitic milieu - as Hitler did - already viewed Jews as diseased and filthy creatures, degenerate and corrupting, outsiders beyond fraternity and compassion. Since the society had already branded the Jews as loathsome pariahs, the Jews could then serve the symbolic and pathological needs of the obsessed and guilt-ridden."

In a summary evaluation of the relationship of this theological tradition of anti-Semitism and its critical formative influence on modern German anti-Semitism, Dr. Dawidowicz makes this compelling statement:

"A line of anti-Semitic descent from Martin Luther to Adolf Hitler is easy to draw. Both Luther and Hitler were obsessed by a demonologized universe inhabited by Jews. 'Know, Christian,' wrote Luther, 'that next to the devil thou hast no enemy more cruel, more venomous and violent than a true Jew.' Hitler himself, in that early dialogue with Dietrich Eckhart, asserted that the later Luther - that is, the violently anti-Semitic Luther - was the genuine Luther. Luther's protective authority was invoked by the Nazis when they came to power, and his anti-Semitic writings enjoyed a revival of popularity. To be sure, the similarities of Luther's anti-Jewish exhortations with modern racial anti-Semitism and even with Hitler's racial policies are not merely coincidental. They all derive from a common historic tradition of Jew-hatred, whose provenance can be traced back to Haman's advice to Ahasuerus. But modern German anti-Semitism had more recent roots than Luther and grew out of a different soil - not that German anti-Semitism was new; it drew part of its sustenance from Christian anti-Semitism, whose foundation had been laid by the Catholic Church and upon which Luther built. It was equally a product of German nationalism. Modern German anti-Semitism was the bastard child of the union of Christian anti-Semitism with German nationalism." (The War Against the Jews, p. 23.)

The Daisenberger text of the Oberammergau Passion Play must be viewed against that background.

III - THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE PASSION PLAY TO THE CURRENT RELIGIOUS CLIMATE

Of all the pageants that dramatize the Crucifixion narrative, the most famous undoubtedly is the Passion Play performed every ten years at Oberammergau, in the solidly Roman Catholic region of Upper Bavaria, in West Germany. Over the centuries, it has been performed in at least five different versions. In modern times, the play and the picturesque mountain

village in which it is performed have become a major international tourist attraction and since the end of World War II, some 1,500,000 people have come to Oberammergau performances. In 1970, according to village officials, some 530,000 people from 113 countries came to Oberammergau to view 102 performances. This indicates that despite its origins as a local village production, Oberammergau's Passion Play now has assumed an unprecedented international importance influencing the image of German Catholicism, of Western Christianity, and of Germany itself in many parts of the world.

A prominent feature of most Passion plays, past and present, has been a strong anti-Jewish component, focused not only on Jesus' individual Jewish antagonists, but - by implication or explicit statement - on the Jewish people as a whole. A prominent Protestant scholar, Dr. Bernhard E. Olson, author of the landmark study, Faith and Prejudice (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963, p. 195) commented on this genre of pageants.

The crucifixion drama is ..regarded, not without reason as having played a prominent part in Jewish disabilities through the centuries as well as providing a major cause of negative attitudes toward Jews today.

Similarly, a respected Catholic, Father John T. Pawlikowski, O.S.M., writes in his study, Catechetics and Prejudice, (Paulist Press, New York, 1973, p. 100):

A major problem in Christian-Jewish relations...was the blame frequently placed upon the Jewish people as a whole for the death of Jesus. Historians have found that the doctrine of deicide was never officially proclaimed by a church council or by a papal decree. Yet it was widespread among the Christian masses since the time of the early Church and Church authorities rarely took any steps to curb its influence. This charge has led to a history of bitter persecution of Jews by Christians. Most of this terrible history does not appear in textbooks dealing with the history of the Church. Thus, most Catholics are simply uninformed about the long tradition of Christian anti-Semitism, while most Jews are well aware of it.

The Oberammergau Passion Play is no exception to this rule of "providing a major cause of negative attitudes towards Jews today" - a fact fully recognized by the enemies of the Jews. One of Oberammergau's strongest admirers in modern times was Adolf Hitler, who stated at the height of the Second World War (Adolf Hitler, Secret Conversations, 1941-1944, New York, Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1953, p. 457).

It is vital that the Passion Play be continued at Oberammergau; for never has the menace of Jewry been so convincingly portrayed.

Under the Nazi government, the Oberammergau Passion Play was classified as "a racially important cultural document," and on the occasion of the pageant's tercentennial, in 1934, a Nazified special performance represented Jesus and his disciples as Aryan heroes.

The performance in 1950 and 1960 went back to the version used before the Nazi era - a text originally written by a priest named Joseph Alois Daisenberger for the 1860 season. Daisenberger's text is free from the 19th and 20th century-style racism, but it abounds with anti-Jewish religious prejudices and misstatements - as well as demonological and satanic images of Jews as being in league with the Antichrist - long established in the popular tradition described earlier in this paper.

Until recent decades, the anti-Jewish tenor of the Daisenberger text does not appear to have troubled many Christian consciences. Attention was focused on this critical concern only after the Second World War, when in the wake of the Nazi horror the Christian world began to reappraise its attitudes toward Jews and Judaism. That spirit is well reflected in the recently published book, Christology After Auschwitz, by Father Michael B. McGarry, C.S.P., (Paulist Press, New York, 1977, p. 1):

On the Christian side, theologians and Church leaders, in moments of contrition and bewilderment, wonder how such a catastrophe as the holocaust could have happened in a

Christian country, in a nation nurtured and steeped in the Christian tradition. Antisemitism, to be sure, predates Christianity, but never before have men focused such a genocidal fury on the Jews with such an unambiguous goal - the annihilation of the Jewish people.

In an effort to eradicate every form of, and justification for, antisemitism from Christianity, Church theologians and leaders have tried to investigate what could have laid the groundwork for such an expression of hate and utter disregard for human dignity. Some, ashamed at their own Church's silence during the attempt at the "final solution" have pointed to the "unChristian behavior" of the Christian Church. That is, if Christians had been more truly faithful to the teachings of Christ, they never could have given in to the evils of antisemitism.

Others have suggested that the answer is deeper and more radical than a matter of moral behavior. The basis for antisemitism is to be found in the Scriptures themselves, or, if not in the New Testament, in the content of Church teaching and doctrine. Jesus' dispute with Jewish leaders, the caricature of Jewish ritual and synagogue, the "infidelity" of the formerly chosen - these and other anti-Judaistic themes run through the Holy Book of Christians. In recent years, numerous studies have looked carefully at the New Testament to glean from it whether, in fact, the very Scriptures are antisemitic. These investigations come to different conclusions, but at least it can be said, "Christianity (especially the New Testament) wrongly understood offers a constant temptation for hostility against the Jews and the Synagogue."

In this reappraisal, the decisive influence has been Vatican Council II's Declaration on Non-Christian Religions, Nostra Aetate, adopted nearly unanimously in 1965 by 2,500 Council Fathers from throughout the world, with which the Roman Catholic Church embarked on a new policy of promoting "mutual respect and fraternal dialogue" between Catholics and Jews.

The Vatican Declaration acknowledges the Jewish roots of Christianity, and emphasizes that the Virgin Mary, Jesus himself and his early disciples sprang from the Jewish people. It states that, even though "Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation" and most Jews did not accept the Gospel,"

God holds the Jews most dear for the sake of the Fathers (the Jewish Patriarchs), His gift and call are irrevocable.

Most important, the Vatican Declaration asserts:

Although the Jewish authorities and those who followed their lead pressed for the death of Christ, nevertheless what happened to Christ in His Passion cannot be attributed to all Jews without distinction, then alive, nor to the Jews of today... Besides, as the Church has always held and holds now, Christ underwent His Passion and death freely, because of the sins of men and out of infinite love, in order that all may reach salvation.

For these reasons, the Vatican Declaration calls on those who teach and preach not to utter "anything that is inconsistent with the truth of the Gospel and with the spirit of Christ," and states that the Catholic Church "deplores hatred, persecutions, displays of anti-Semitism directed against Jews at any time and by any one."

In 1968, Pope Paul VI personally appointed a Vatican Secretariat on Religious Relations with Judaism, which, in elaboration of Nostra Aetate, promulgated in 1975 a document called Vatican Guidelines on Catholic-Jewish Relations. These Guidelines declared that "the spiritual bonds and historical links binding the Church to Judaism condemn (as opposed to the very spirit of Christianity) all forms of anti-Semitism and discrimination, which in any case the dignity of the human person alone would suffice to condemn."

The Vatican Guidelines specify that "these links and relationships render obligatory a better mutual understanding and renewed mutual esteem" in the areas of Dialogue, Liturgy, Teaching and Education, "at all levels of Christian instruction and education," including Catechisms and religious textbooks, the mass media (press, radio, cinema, television), and joint social action. "With respect to liturgical readings," the Guidelines declare, "care will be taken to see that homilies based on them will not distort their meaning, especially when it is a question of passages which seem to show the Jewish people as such in an unfavorable light. Efforts will be made so to instruct the Christian people that they will understand the true interpretations of all the texts and their meaning for the contemporary believer."

The Guidelines add:

Commissions entrusted with the task of liturgical translation will pay particular attention to the way in which they express those phrases and passages which Christians, if not well informed, might misunderstand because of prejudice. Obviously, one cannot alter the text of the Bible. The point is that, with a version destined for liturgical use, there should be an overriding preoccupation to bring out explicitly the meaning of a text while taking scriptural studies into account. (Thus the formula "the Jews" in St. John sometimes, according to the context, means "the leaders of the Jews" or "the adversaries of Jesus," terms which express better the thought of the Evangelist and avoid appearing to arraign the Jewish people as such. Another example is the use of the words "Pharisee" and "Pharisaism" which have taken on a largely pejorative meaning.) The preceding remarks apply to introductions to Biblical readings, to the Prayer of the Faithful and to commentaries printed in missals used by the laity

The new interest in the Oberammergau Passion Play created by the Vatican Declaration (and the Vatican Guidelines) have led to demands for revision by Christians and Jews. The municipal authorities of Oberammergau, who exercise sole control over the production, have announced that a revision of the Daisenberger text was undertaken for use in the 1970 performance. (The authors of this revision have not been publicly identified.)

According to statements by Oberammergau spokesmen, the latest text of the Passion Play no longer contains anti-Jewish elements, except where dictated by the need to follow the Biblical accounts faithfully. Thus, the director of the 1970 production, Anton Preisinger, has stated,

The text has been thoroughly overhauled, but we cannot change what the Bible says, at times the Bible does use hard words about the Jews. (Reported in London Daily Telegraph, Nov. 17, 1969.)

Similarly, Ernst Zwink, Presiding Mayor of Oberammergau and Chairman of the Passion Play Committee, wrote on February 26, 1970, to the Upper Bavarian Government that the Committee had seriously and honestly striven to "attempt changes and to purge the text of all passages which can be misunderstood, in order to take into account the spirit of the times."

In his letter, the Mayor rejected the imputation that the revised text might still be anti-Jewish in some degree: "The question whether the text is in harmony with the thoughts and wishes of the Vatican Council II, and whether it has anti-Semitic dispositions must be considered as a tendentious distortion." Indeed, he suggested that there was not much that could have been revised. "The Daisenberger text (1860) is close to the obligatory basis of the Passion reports in the New Testament and to the views expressed by responsible experts in the field." These experts were not named.

To assess the validity of the claim that the current version of the Oberammergau Passion Play no longer contains anti-Jewish elements, the American Jewish Committee, long concerned with the effect of Passion Plays on Christians' attitudes toward Jews and Judaism, undertook a comparative content analysis of the 1960 and 1970 scripts. Published in German and English under the title, Oberammergau 1960 and 1970: A Study in Religious Anti-Semitism, the analysis compared line-by-line the Daisenberger text in the original German, as performed in 1960 with the official German script prepared for 1970. To our knowledge, it is the first line-by-line analysis of the 1960 and 1970 scripts.

The analysis deals solely with text passages, deletions and modifications that bear on the representation of Jews and Judaism. Changes that were clearly made for dramatic or stylistic reasons only - such as the removal of repetitions, or modernization of out-of-date expressions - have been disregarded.

A copy of this analysis in German is being made available to each of the members of this Symposium for detailed study.

The American Jewish Committee analysis came to these conclusions:

Taken all in all, the 1970 revision of the Passion Play text falls far short of removing all gratuitous anti-Jewish elements. However well-intentioned those responsible for the updating may have been in their desire to "purge the text of all passages which can be misunderstood," the attempt has not succeeded.

Except for one excision of some length (the prologue and the tableau opening Act II which, revealingly, associated Jesus' antagonists with "all the spirits...up from nethermost Hell/Which from Creation's dawn stubbornly have rebelled/And forever have discord/Sowed against the Divine" - images of the Antichrist), the revisions are limited to deletions and modifications of emotionally charged individual words or brief phrases. Even this editing has been so inconsistently carried out that not one of the objectionable themes or ideas in the earlier version has wholly disappeared. Indeed, the characters as well as the story line and its implications are quite unchanged:

1) The 1970 "revised" text, like its predecessor, still draws Jesus' antagonists as fiendish, almost subhuman creatures, thus perpetuating the medieval images of the Jews as "demons of destruction," "dyables d'enfer, enemys du genre humain."

2) It misrepresents Jewish religion in Jesus' time as harsh, corrupt and worthless, thereby violating the Vatican Guidelines' instruction that "The Old Testament and the Jewish tradition founded upon it must not be set against the New Testament in such a way that the former seems to constitute a religion of only justice, fear, and legalism, with no appeal to the love of God and neighbor (cf. Deut. 6.15; Lev. 19 18; Matt. 22:34-40.)"

3) It falsely turns Jesus and his disciples into renegades from Judaism, concealing their roots in the Jewish past and their commitment to

Jewish religion and ethics. That historical caricature is in opposition to the statement of the Vatican Guidelines:

Jesus was born of the Jewish people, as were the Apostles and a large number of His first Disciples...And although His teaching had a profoundly new character, Christ, nevertheless, in many instances took His stand on the teaching of the Old Testament. The New Testament is profoundly marked by its relation to the Old...Jesus also used teaching methods similar to those employed by the rabbis of His time.

4) It presents all Jews as enemies of Jesus, asserts they knowingly accepted the guilt in his death for themselves and their descendants, and maintains that they have been permanently rejected by God for this reason, contradicting the explicit teaching of Vatican Council II and the Vatican Guidelines.

Reflecting major trends in contemporary Christian scholarship which unambiguously rejects the "deicide" canard against the Jewish people, Dr. Eugene Fisher, a noted Catholic educator who is the executive secretary of the Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations of the U. S. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, writes in his book, Faith Without Prejudice (Paulist Press, New York, 1977) under the chapter heading, "Who Killed Jesus?" the following

The Catechism of the Council of Trent, Article IV, as promulgated in the sixteenth century.. shows clearly what has always been essential Christian teaching on responsibility for the death of Christ. Theologically, all humanity bears the blame. It is not one particular group, but the sins of us all that are responsible for his death. The same Council of Trent also declared that the crucifixion was Christ's free decision "It was the peculiar privilege of Christ the Lord to have died when He Himself decreed to die, and to have died not so much by external violence as by internal assent..."

The New Testament does not present history in our sense of the term. It reveals the meaning of history. As revelation, it is not intended to give us merely a listing of facts and events. Rather it aims to teach us the salvific will of God that underlines all human events. Only in this way is it "relevant" to us: that it reveals to us our own sins and our own salvation. To the question "Who Killed Jesus?" the Christian replies: "I did "

"He (Jesus) himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness (I Peter 2:24).

As Christians, we are saved only to the extent that we identify ourselves as the crucifiers of Jesus.

5) It falsifies the character and historic role of Pilate, and shifts the role of the crucifier from the Romans to the Jews.

This sympathetic portrayal of Pilate contradicts the findings of modern Biblical scholarship which, as Father Pawlikowski has written, "has shown quite convincingly that the death of Jesus was not a plot engineered by the general Jewish populace. As Father Bruce Vawter has insisted, 'there seems to be no doubt that Jewish responsibility has been heightened at the expense of the Roman. In particular, the governor Pontius Pilate as portrayed in the Gospels appears to be credited with a greater degree of disinterested justice in his makeup than other historical sources concerning him would cause us to suspect.'"

Father Vawter also goes on to say that "a factual history of the trial and death of Jesus has to be reconstructed rather than read from the Gospels ..A great deal of vital background material is missing from the Gospel narratives as they now stand. It must be supplied through auxiliary readings and commentaries." (p. 107, Catechetics and Prejudice.)

Dr. Eugene Fisher, in his book, Faith Without Prejudice, states

Contemporary accounts of Pilate show another picture of him. Pilate was so brutal that even Rome could not take him for long, and he was eventually called back by Rome because of excessive cruelty. A letter of the period reveals Pilate's true character. It charges him with "corruptibility, violence, robberies, ill-treatment of the people, grievances, continuous executions without trial, endless and intolerable cruelties."

And Father Pawlikowski concludes,

This situation makes it almost impossible for even the very best of passion plays to entirely avoid a travesty of the Gospel story. We cannot obtain a fully accurate picture of the trial and death

of Jesus from reading the Gospels alone. This is the clear conclusion of the vast majority of modern Biblical scholars.

6) It fails to make clear the background of oppressive Roman rule against which the drama of Jesus' ministry was enacted, and without which the actions of Jesus' antagonists cannot be understood.

The United States Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations has issued a statement on Passion Plays, with guidelines for improvement (February 28, 1968.)

The statement points out that in trying to heighten religious fervor, carelessly written or produced Passion plays can become a source of anti-Semitic reactions, contrary to the spirit of the Vatican Declaration on Non-Christian Religions. Writers and producers of such pageants are specifically warned to avoid the following exaggerations and misinterpretations:

- 1) "To conceal the fact that Jesus is a Jew and that His friends as well as His enemies in the drama are Jews;"
- 2) "To create the impression that most Jews of Jesus' day willed His death, failing to show that the secrecy surrounding much of Jesus' trial was motivated by the large following He had in Jerusalem,"
- 3) "To change the 'crowd' before the governor's palace into a screaming 'mob,' as representing all Jerusalem, and indeed all Israel;"
- 4) "To depict Pilate, whom historiography has shown to have been a ruthless tyrant, as an innocent and kindly bystander;"
- 5) "To highlight those texts of the gospel narrative that are amenable to misinterpretation by uninformed audiences, such as, 'His blood upon us and upon our children' (Matt. 27.25)."

The Secretariat for Catholic-Jewish Relations has defined the true purpose of the Passion plays as follows: "To increase in the hearts of their audiences a greater love of God and of men, reminding them that those who played a part in the Passion drama were, in the Christian view,

representatives of all of us."

One wishes the 1970 and the proposed 1980 Oberammergau pageants had adhered to this definition instead of falling, as they do, into every one of the pitfalls the Secretariat has cautioned against. As it is, the summer of 1970 found half a million people viewing a spectacle that differed little, not only from its immediate predecessor, but also from what was performed on the same stage in the time of Hitler, who so acutely recognized the harmony between the pageant's anti-Jewish elements and his own anti-Semitic policies. Once more, the old lies, the medieval demonology indicating the Jews as the enemies of God and of mankind, backed by the prestige of the play and the fanfare attending its production, are being declaimed for the entire world to hear.

In sum, our study of the texts and those specific changes proposed for the 1970 version, convinces us that the central theme of the Daisenberger text is the collective guilt of all Jews in the death of Jesus. We wish it were possible to eliminate that hostile and defamatory theme from that text. We, and the Christian authorities and scholars who have studied the problem, believe that the removal of that and related themes from the Daisenberger text would be impossible without destroying the text itself.

We have seen the trial production of the Rosner text which we previewed in August 1977 as an honest effort to give artistic and emotional expression to Christian views of human sin, the possibility of human redemption and Jesus' teachings of love and faith. We and most Christians who have studied the history of religious differences between Christianity and Judaism agree that the central theme of the Daisenberger text contradicts all of these teachings while the central theme of the Rosner text does not. It is the right of the Oberammergau Town Council to nonetheless choose to perform

Daisenberger. It would also be the right of both other Christians and Jews to draw their own conclusions about such a decision.

On November 9, 1978, the date of the 40th anniversary of Kristallnacht, His Eminence Cardinal Hoeffner, president of the German Catholic Bishops Conference, issued a public statement in which he declared:

"Today, forty years after the horrible events, should be an occasion for every individual who was alive at that time to examine his conscience and ask himself. 'What have I done then, and what have I failed to do then?'

"And this day is posing to all Christians the question what they are doing today that these things should not happen again.

"In memory of all the victims among the Jewish people in the years 1933-45, I want to assure you that the Catholic Church in Germany, faithful to the Guidelines of Vatican Council II, will counteract in its preachings, instructions, and by all means, antisemitism and all racial hatred, and work for good neighborliness and friendship among Jews and Christians "

All over the world, people of good will await the decision of Oberammergau authorities to obey fully the mandate of their church, as enunciated by Vatican Council II and the German Catholic Conference of Bishops.

MHT:RPR

78-700-82



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

PARIS OFFICE • 30, Rue La Boetie Paris 75008, France • Elysees 69-11, 83-63 • Cable: Wishcom, Paris

Abraham Karlikow, European Director

February 6, 1978.

Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York - N.Y. 10022

Dear Marc:

As you probably know the residents of Oberammergau in a recent publicist have rejected the reformed version of the passion play which we have witnessed. The publicist showed that 60% of the population favored staging the play with the traditional text, which was objectionable in so many ways.

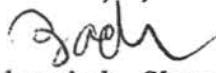
I have been in contact with our sources in Germany and among them with Dr. Hans Lamm, President of the Jewish community of Munich. He already took action in contacting Cardinal Dr. Joseph Ratzinger and Dr. Josef Strauss, who is, as you know, one of the most important political leaders in Germany and the head of the strongest party in Bavaria. Steps are also being taken by the coordinating council of German Jewish societies.

I am expecting to hear from them as to the prospects of success of the actions undertaken.

As you know the next IJCIC meeting with the Vatican representatives is scheduled to take place on April 5th in Madrid. I hope that you will be able to attend but I should like to hear your assurance to this effect. In this connection I also would like to know of our decision with regard to participation in the Spanish-Israel seminar which is scheduled to follow the meeting with the Vatican and whether you intend to stay over for the seminar.

With warmest regards.

Sincerely yours,


Zachariah Shuster

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TRANSLATION by George Salomon

Citizen's Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play

Theaterstrasse 8
8103 Oberammergau
February 25, 1978

OPEN LETTER

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York
New York 10022

Dear Mr. Tanenbaum

We are glad that you desire friendly relations with our community. During the years of the Third Reich, this very community aided many Jews, so friendly relations should be a matter of course.

You will therefore surely understand that we must reject any meddling in the internal affairs of the village. Of course we are willing to listen to criticism; but it must be grounded in fact and must take realities into account. We realize that you cannot judge correctly, since you have never viewed the Daisenberger=Dedler Passion. Over the last 128 years, millions of people have departed from this spectacle with deep emotion. We cannot imagine that your impression would be different.

You believe the Daisenberger=Dedler Passion to be anti-Semitic. Unfortunately, just like Mr. Schwaighofer and Dr. Fischer here in town, you fail to specify details and reasons; but criticism must be based on reasons. As you know, the Daisenberger=Dedler version is being revised for 1980; specifically, it is being shortened somewhat and examined for passages that might convey an impression of anti-Semitism, although such is not really the case. In this connection we do wish to hear Jewish arguments and points of criticism. Since you have a copy of the Daisenberger text, we would be grateful if you could let us have your points of criticism regarding this text by the beginning of May. We can consider criticisms that are submitted to us. It would be in our mutual interest if you were to accept this offer of cooperation, because otherwise we would have to explain to the world press that Jewish quarters declined to help with the version preferred by Oberammergau. You surely will not wish to have it said that your organization is trying to dictate to Oberammergau which play is to be performed. We assume that you are no less democratic than your American fellow-citizens.

Since you have never seen the Daisenberger play, you cannot have understood it correctly. In our Daisenberger play, which is preferred by a large majority of the population, the Jews opposed to Christ act out of inner conviction, out of their faith. It is different in the Rosner version; there they are represented as tools of evil.* You will permit us to ask whether it is good for Jewry when only evil spirits can influence

**The original German is ambiguous here; the phrase can also mean "tools of the Evil One." -- Translator's note.*

the Jews, as in the Rosner play...

Like millions of believing Christians, we are of the opinion that the collective guilt of the Jews is not, indeed cannot be, the issue in our Passion. It is, after all, the greatest distinction of the Jewish people that Christ arose from it. Thus, we do not understand why Jewish organizations oppose Passion plays, when their people gains distinction from them.

You will surely understand our indignation about your boycott threat in the name of the American people and of "the world's citizens," and about you questioning of the democratic character of our country. Hundreds of thousands of your American fellow citizens have been deeply moved by Oberammergau, whereas you represent only one American minority, albeit an influential one, of whose opinions we take notice. But you do not represent America, let alone other countries. Nor can we acquiesce in your doubting our country's democratic character. Our country is one of the most democratic in the world -- though it is true that democracy is put in doubt when a communal council acts contrary to the clear will of a majority of the population, as happened in our village a few weeks before the March 5 election.

We find it interesting that you do not utter a single word to say that a Rosner Passion, if any, would not be boycotted by your organization. According to various statements by some Jewish organizations, Passion plays ought to be done away with as a matter of principle.

We will be glad to cooperate with you, but only on an appropriate basis. The final and decisive word lies with Oberammergau and its citizens.

Sincerely yours,

Citizen's Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play

Melchior Breitsamter, Sen.
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Deputy Chairman

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Press Spokesman

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Associate

Willi Stückl
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Alois Maderspacher
Associate

GS:RPR

3/7/78

cc:BG,MY,SH,Btrosten,m jaffe, r weis,n flatow, fran rosenberg,m polner
On Memo Paper

Date: December 1, 1978

TO: AJC Area Directors, JCRCs, Federations, National Jewish Organizations
FROM: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, National Interreligious Affairs Director
SUBJECT: REPORT ON BAVARIAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY SYMPOSIUM ON PASSION PLAYS
SEMINAR
AND HISTORIC ~~MEETINGS~~ IN OBERAMMERGAU ON ANTI-SEMITISM

Two significant developments took place in Bavaria, West Germany, last week. While they centered on AJC's continued efforts since the 1950s to bring about a fundamental removal of ~~anti-Semitism~~ anti-Semitic references in the Oberammergau Passion Play, particularly its present Daisenberger text, these events initiated several ~~new~~ developments that assumed a potential historic importance in German-Jewish relationships that far transcended the Passion Play itself.

On Sunday, November 19, the Bavarian Catholic Academy in Munich, "the Brookings Institute" think-tank of the ~~Catholic~~ Roman Catholic Church in Germany, co-sponsored with the AJC's Interreligious Affairs Department a day-long symposium on the subject, "The Passion of Jesus - Then and Now." In August 1978, an AJC delegation met with key ~~German~~ officials of the German Government, the Catholic Church, German academics, leading editors and radio and TV personalities, and a delegation from Oberammergau.

Meeting in Munich, we indicated that we were dissatisfied with the present course of events which continuously seemed to pit the Jewish community in a running polemic with ultra-conservative factions in Oberammergau. ~~which~~ The basic issues we were raising about the need for honest and accurate portrayal of Jews and Judaism, and anti-Semitism, were being lost in a continuous cross-fire of press releases and a barrage of charges and counter-charges. And behind

the screen of the "propaganda warfare" the right-wing elements in Oberammergau, bolstered by reactionary political, economic and religious forces, continued to plod doggedly forward with their plan to produce the Daisenberger script in 1980, masked by cosmetic changes and a planned new "prologue". (The "prologue" is to say that the Jews are not collectively guilty for killing Christ, but the entire play will then assert that indeed they are(!))

We proposed that the time is past due for a serious, systematic examination by ^{German} scholars and church leaders of the critical themes of the Catholic Church's present understanding of Jews and Judaism, and the methods by which Passion Plays advance that modern mentality or contradict it.

Prof. Franz Henrich, the brilliant director of the Bavarian Catholic Academy, responded enthusiastically to our proposal. He agreed to sponsor an official symposium on this topic, and, as an indication of his seriousness and commitment, he insisted that the Academy provide the entire budget for the conference and make it one of the major undertakings of their academic year.

Although held on a Sunday from 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., the symposium was attended by an audience of some 400 people, with dozens of people turned away from the packed auditorium. The participants came from throughout Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, with particularly heavy representation from Oberammergau and from Dachau. They represented a high-level cross-section of academic scholars, theologians, Christian educators, Government officials, ^{civic leaders,} and numerous representatives from major German print and radio and TV media, including Der Spiegel, Der Stern, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, and Bavarian Rundfunk radio, and German educational television.

letter from Mayor Ernst Zwink of Oberammergau who charged that "this symposium was a conspiracy on the part of the American Jewish Committee and certain Oberammergau people" to undermine the Passion Play and he asked that the Symposium not be held. "That is unacceptable," Prof. Henrich told the audience, "and we reject it completely." He also disclosed that Oberammergau Town Council refused to send any official representation to the Symposium.

"It is Christian duty," Prof. Henrich added, "to constantly look at the narrative of the Passion in light of today's knowledge both in terms of of historical research and biblical theology." Prof. Henrich was loudly and warmly applauded.

Three scholarly papers were then presented. Prof. Dr. Bo Reicke, professor of New Testament at the University of Basel, Switzerland, ~~presented~~ delivered a lecture on "The Historical Background of the Passion of Jesus" in which he synthesized the findings of contemporary scholarship on the Roman occupation of first century Palestine, the actual role of Pontius Pilate as a ruthless Procurator, the Roman institution of crucifixion, the Roman domination of the Sanhedrin and the Sadducees and Pharisees, and the limited role of Jewish leaders in the trial of Jesus.

Prof. Dr. Franz Mussner, professor of Biblical Theology at the University of Regensburg, presented a paper on "Who Bears the Guilt for the Death of Jesus? Theological Perspectives". He detailed the various and often contradictory accounts of the trial and crucifixion that are found in the New Testament, owing to the differing time periods in the emergence of the Early Church during which the Gospels were composed.

Prof. Dr. Friederich Kienecher, professor of New German Literary History and Didactic Literature at the University of Paderborn, gave a lecture on "The Passion of Jesus: A Critical Literary Perspective" in which he detailed the folk character of popular understanding of the Passion as medieval morality play in contrast to modern literary treatments of the Passion by great creative artists.

Both Professors ~~Reinke~~ Reicke and Mussner stated that "contrary to what naive people often suggest, the removal of anti-Jewish referenes or tendencies in Passion Plays is not the same as rewriting the Gospels. In telling the story of the crucifixion, the Gospels held back a good deal of the political, legal, and religious realities of the day, such as the actual rule of the Romans in Palestine, and who was responsible for what. These realities must be considered in order to have a correct portrayal."

They added : "The Gospels themselves are highly conditioned and specialized interpretations of the Passion. One must always consider that the Gospels were written decades after the death of Christ at the time that the young Church was separated from Israel and developed its own faith and ^{independent} consciousness. In that process, the Church developed a growing picture of the Jewish people as the enemy, and inevitably made a caricature of the complex reality of the Pharisees.

"The Gospels also took up its missidnary assignment to spread Christianity in the Roman Empire, and therefore did not deal seriously with the actual role the Rmmans played in the death of Jesus. Thus, there was distortion in fixing properly the charge of who was responsible for the death of Jesus, the Jewish Sanhedrin is portrayed as having only base virtues, there are irrelevant arguments, and Jews and Pharisees

are always portrayed as unsympathetic, cliché figures."

The scholars separately concluded with this consensus: "In the portrayal of the Passion of Jesus, the Jews must now be portrayed with more honesty, with greater respect for their religious traditions, and with greater ~~know~~ recognition of their rich traditions of scholarship. We still have a lot of revision to do in telling the Passion accounts. The Catholic Church has taken heed of the decisions of Vatican Council II in revising its Christian education, teachings, and liturgy. There is a whole assortment of Passion Plays throughout the world, at the head of which is the Oberammergau Passion Play, which have acted as though relations between Christians and Jews have not changed. After Auschwitz, it is a scandal to continue in that manner."

An unexpected surprise came in the appearance of Franco Zeffereilli, the Italian film director who produced the widely-acclaimed NBC-TV production, Jesus of Nazareth. Zeffereilli said that in directing his film on the life of Jesus, he looked upon "the Vatican Council's declarations as providing the basis for freedom to move away from the traditional clichés which present anti-Semitic interpretations of Scriptures." Zeffereilli appealed to the producers of the Oberammergau Passion Play "as a Christian and a son of Abraham" not to use any further their production as a means to incite anti-Semitism, or to persecute Jews, or bring about further separation, and not to repeat the errors of the past. A Passion Play must become a message of love, joy and peace." Great applause from the overwhelming majority of the audience.

There followed a lengthy and fascinating panel discussion which included Dr. Hans Schwaighofer, director of the Rosner version of the Passion Play; Dr. Alois Fink, its editor; Dr. Ernst Maria Lang, a prominent Munich architect; and several others, including myx Rabbi Peter Levinson of Heidelberg, and myself.

One of the most interested revelations was that of Dr. Schwaighofer who quoted from a speech made by Father Daisenberger on the eve of the first production of his play in 1860 in which he instructed the director, "Instruct the actors ~~xxxxxxx~~ playing the Jewish parts to do in a manner that is filled with hatred and vileness; those who play the Christian parts should do so with love and merciful qualities!" So much for the intention behind the author of the Daisenberger script which is being promoted for 1980.'

Based on a paper that I was asked to prepare on the theme, "The Role of Passion Plays in Fostering Anti-Semitism Throughout History," I made the point that Passion Plays owe their origins to medieval morality plays whose central thesis was that human existence was caught up in a cosmic struggle between Christ and the anti-Christ. Since the First Crusade in the 11th century, the Jews were invariably portrayed as the anti-Christ and increasingly assumed the character of the Satanic and the demonic. It can be documented that there was a direct continuity between that theological image of the demonic Jew as the enemies of God and the enemies of mankind and Hitler's portrayal of Jews as "untermenschen" who must be destroyed as the anti-Christ was to be destroyed in order to realize the millenium.

Following the symposium, Prof. Henrich and members of his faculty felt so positive about the achievement of the proceedings,

that he proposed two significant follow-ups:

1) The Bavarian Catholic Academy will consider publishing the ~~read~~ papers and proceedings in German for distribution throughout Germany;

2) The Academy would like to sponsor another symposium on a related theme during the next academic year in order to keep the momentum of this conference going.

Our AJC delegation - after expressing our deep appreciation for the success of this unprecedented meeting - indicated our willingness to collaborate in both ventures.

OBERAMMERGAU

At the invitation of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft of Oberammergau, the several hundred people affiliated with the Rosner production (see the attached letter), our AJC delegation went to the Oberammergau village the next evening. Our delegation consisted of Miles Jaffe, national chairman of the interreligious affairs commission; Richard Weis, chairman of the AJC Chapter in Los Angeles and a leader in interreligious affairs; William Trosten, director of AJC Development who is fluent in German and who spent years in Bavaria with the American Military Government; Zachariah Schuster, ~~xxx~~ of Paris, consultant in interreligious affairs in Europe; and myself.

For the first time in the history of Oberammergau, we were invited to present a lecture of "The History of Anti-Semitism and Jewish-Christian Relations Today". We began with shown a film on this subject prepared by a Roman Catholic nun, Sister Susan Noffke, O.P., called "The Troubled Brotherhood." For the majority of the 200 Oberammergauers who packed the hall, this was their first introduction to the main experiences of anti-Semitism in the Christian West, and

to some basic knowledge about Jews, Judaism, Israel, and the Nazi holocaust as viewed through Jewish perspectives. There was a long and lively discussion about such questions, "How do Judaism and Christianity Differ?" "Why were Jews made into money-lenders in Germany and Europe?" W "What Do Jews Believe About the Messiah?" "What is the difference between a Priest and a Rabbi?"

The spirit was warm and sympathetic, and concluded with sustained applause.

Outcome: AJC was invited to organize a seminar during the coming year with a group of Jewish scholars to come to Oberammergau to spend a week giving lectures on the basic issues raised during our first seminar.

Summing up both ~~the~~ the experiences ~~and~~ of the Munich symposium and the Oberammergau seminar, this much appears to be clear:

These several breakthroughs have taken place;

First, the debate over the Oberammergau Passion Play is no longer a controversy between American Jews and Oberammergau villagers. The Munich Academy symposium have shifted the entire perspective - now the world of German Catholic academics, theologians, and church officials are demanding that justice be done to the Jews and that Oberammergau Town Council officials put an end to anti-Semitism.

Second, if the Daisenberger text will be manipulated for the 1980 production, everyone feels confident that this will be the last time it will shown. In 1984, the 300th anniversary of the Passion Play, the Rosner production will be played, and thereafter hopefully it will be the official production for 1980 and ~~thereafter~~ beyond.

Third, for the first time a new mentality based on knowledge is beginning to be developed in Oberammergau itself. Dayenu!

ORP

(TRANSLATION FROM GERMAN)

March 31, 1978

To the Village Council of Oberammergau
Citizens' Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play
8103 Oberammergau
West Germany

Gentlemen:

We have received your open letter concerning the Oberammergau Passion Play. We welcomed your expression of views, because we are convinced that only honest discussion among all parties concerned can bring the serious problems raised by the Passion Play nearer to a solution.

In all candor, I must tell you at the outset that your tone and some of the implications contained in your letter have filled me with chagrin. However, since forgiveness is one of the central virtues of Biblical and Rabbinic Judaism (in which, of course, Jesus and the Disciples grew up and in which the early Christian Church was nurtured), I will put aside any feelings of affront and address myself matter-of-factly to the several issues your letter raises.

The American Jewish Committee has not sought to "meddle in the internal affairs" of Oberammergau. In our discussions in your village as well as in our comments to the press, we have emphasized repeatedly that we respect the Passion Play as an artistic creation of the village of Oberammergau. As a pioneer human rights and civil liberties organization in the United States, we have fought since our beginning any form of censorship and any restriction of the freedom of expression.

But, as anyone conversant with the history of democratic liberties knows, freedom of expression involves duties as well as rights. The various United Nations Covenants against racial and religious discrimination condemn all public expressions that could incite "hatred, violence or bigotry" against any racial, religious or ethnic groups in the world. Citizens of countries that have signed these covenants are obligated to abide by this fundamental principle of respect for the religious faith and traditions of other people.

With all respect for the Passion Play as a creation of Oberammergau, it is an inescapable fact -- one of those "facts" and "realities" that you rightly urge us to take into account-- that the play is not just an "internal matter" of consequence solely to the local

residents. As you indicate in your open letter with apparent pride and gratification, "over the last 128 years, millions of people have departed from this spectacle with deep emotion." According to your press announcements, in 1970 alone some 500,000 people from 113 countries viewed it.

By your own admission, therefore, the Oberammergau Passion Play has become an international event. Its moral, spiritual, and social effects are a matter of consequence far beyond the village borders. Oberammergau has successfully promoted its Passion Play as an international artistic achievement so as to attract larger and larger audiences from all parts of the world. It seems to us that your very success precludes your disregarding critical responses by people outside your village as "meddling."

Moreover, because of its international significance, the Oberammergau Passion Play is widely viewed as a kind of symbol or barometer, which is thought to register not only the Oberammergau residents' attitudes toward anti-Semitism, the Jewish People, living Judaism and democratic principles, but the attitude of all Bavaria, or of today's Germany as a whole.

You say we have doubts about democracy in your country. We do not. But it would not be sensible of you or of us to disregard that such doubts exist in the Western countries. If Oberammergau determinedly refuses to take into account the points we submitted to you, it cannot help but strengthen such doubts.

We do not understand your reference to a boycott threat by us. The American Jewish Committee has said no such thing. Throughout its history, the Committee, with its offices in Europe, Central and South America and the Middle East, has neither organized boycotts nor supported them. We have sought to point out to you that Roman Catholic and Protestant, as well as Jewish, groups in the U.S. and elsewhere would find a performance of the Daisenberger-Dedler version deeply offensive: as a blow to present-day views concerning Jewish-Christian relations which are based on the most serious Biblical and historical scholarship and on universal conceptions of human rights. But that is not a boycott threat.

Our statements to you find confirmation in unfavorable utterances about the Daisenberger text by the highest authorities of the Roman Catholic hierarchy and the leadership of Protestant churches in the U.S., Germany and other countries. The issue, then, is not whether we would participate in a boycott if any; the issue is what the world would say to a performance of the Daisenberger version in 1980. We believe it would be strongly condemned in many places, particularly since a performance of the Rosner text was expected.

As you state, we do believe that the Daisenberger Passion Play does favor anti-Semitic attitudes. But we find it difficult to understand how you can say that we have not specified "details and reasons" for our criticism. Several months prior to the 1970 production, we sent to the then leaders of Oberammergau a detailed analysis comparing the amended text, line by line, with that of 1960. In this scholarly document, the reasons for our criticism are spelled out in full detail. Indeed, in 1970 the Village of Oberammergau published a volume in defense of the text which in effect was a response to the historical, theological and Biblical issues pointed to in our study.

You ask us to provide "Jewish arguments and points of criticism" concerning the Daisenberger text. We are glad to comply and enclose several copies of our analysis (Oberammergau 1960 and 1970: A Study in Religious Anti-Semitism). We trust you will review our documentation carefully, and will note in particular our conclusion on page 18:

"The relatively trifling changes made to 'update' the [1970] Oberammergau Passion Play do not alter this basic truth: The play reflects an ingrained negative attitude toward Judaism and Jewry, perpetuated by certain traditions of Christianity."

We also call your attention to page 17, where we stated: "Taken all in all, the 1970 revision of the Passion Play text falls far short of removing all gratuitous anti-Jewish elements." We noted specifically:

"The 1970 text, like its predecessors, still draws Jesus' antagonists as fiendish, almost subhuman creatures.

"It misrepresents Jewish religion in Jesus' time as harsh, corrupt and worthless.

"It presents all Jews as enemies of Jesus, asserts that they knowingly accepted the guilt in his death for themselves and their descendants, and maintains that they have been permanently rejected by God for this reason.

"It falsifies the character and historic role of Pilate, and shifts the role of the crucifier from the Romans to the Jews.

"It fails to make clear the background of oppressive Roman rule against which the drama of Jesus' ministry was enacted, and without which the actions of Jesus' Jewish antagonists cannot be understood."

Our study of the various texts and the criticisms just noted convince us that the alleged collective guilt of all Jews in the death of Jesus is a continuous leitmotiv in Daisenberger's text. We wish it were possible to eliminate that hostile theme, but neither we nor the Christian authorities who have studied the problem believe this can be done without destroying the Daisenberger text itself.

We again point out that our understanding of the themes of the Daisenberger text is not only a Jewish understanding. In this context, we think first of all of Nostra aetate, the fundamental declaration of the Second Vatican Council on the relationship of the Church to non-Christian religions and on Catholic-Jewish friendship. We also call your attention to pages 20-22 of our analysis, where an official proclamation of the American Catholic hierarchy in the U.S., as well as statements by Catholic and Protestant scholars, are quoted verbatim. These criticisms agree with our views, as do many comments in the general and the religious press. We enclose some articles from the American press, referring to the latest declarations made on February 17, 1978, by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops and the (Protestant) National Council of Churches. The Daisenberger text is generally disapproved and rejected there, and this disapproval clearly cannot be waved aside as merely a parochial concern of the Jewish people.

The disagreement between us and you is summarized by one sentence in your letter. You write: "We do not understand why Jewish organizations oppose Passion Plays, when their people gain distinction from them." The distinctions we have gained over the centuries from the notions of a collective Jewish blood guilt for the death of Jesus and of an attendant "eternal curse" have been hatred, persecution, bloodshed, and finally genocide. Dachau and Auschwitz are the traumatic reminders of that dehumanization of the Jewish people.

Since the Second Vatican Council, the majority of the Christian world has recognized this truth. We ask: When will you in Oberammergau finally recognize it?

In your trial production of the Rosner version, we saw an honest effort to give stirring artistic expression to Christian views of sin and redemption and to Jesus' teachings of love and faith. We and most Christians who have seriously concerned themselves with the history of religious differences between Jews and Christians agree that the notion of Jewish collective guilt contradicts their teachings. And collective guilt is the leitmotiv in the Daisenberger version: in the Rosner version it is not.

Oberammergau nonetheless has the right to perform the Daisenberger version; but in that event, other Christians as well as Jews would have the right to draw their own conclusions from such a decision.

Sincerely yours,
THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE

(s) Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
Director, Ecumenical and
Jewish-Christian Affairs



Oberammergau

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

CONFIDENTIAL

date July 21, 1978
to Bert Gold & Miles Jaffe
from Marc Tanenbaum
subject MEETINGS IN MUNICH JULY 19-21 RE OBERAMMERGAU

This is a preliminary report in summary form of the major developments that emerged out of our several meetings in Munich this week. Bill Trosten will be returning from Oberammergau to New York next Wednesday and will augment this report with his own.

In the main, this was an extremely useful trip, and, as will be indicated below, could be of potentially far-reaching, constructive importance on a number of levels. As you know, in overseas telephone calls, both Dr. Alois Fink and Dr. Hans Schwaighofer strongly urged us to come to Germany at this time which they regarded as critical in the decision-making process.

Our first meeting took place from 2-5:30 p.m. in a conference room at the Vier Jahreszeiten Hotel in Munich. There was in attendance an interesting mixture of groups:

a) A delegation of four people from Oberammergau, headed by Dr. Hans Schwaighofer, OPP director (Dr. Alois Fink, OPP editor, had a week-long assignment in Wiesbaden and could not be present.)

b) Hannes Berger, political-cultural editor of the major daily of Munich, Der Suddeutsche Zeitung. Berger, an impressive intelligence in his mid-thirties, who has written numerous pro-Rosner articles and editorials, has emerged as a key affirmative influence in the discussions;

c) Rev. ---- Sanders, an articulate Catholic priest, deeply engaged in promoting Catholic-Jewish relations in Bavaria;

d) Mr. ---- Stoltz (?), a radio commentator for Bavarian Radio, thoughtful and helpful to us in the manner of journalist Berger.

e) Karl Koepcke of Lufthansa, who played his usual supportive role. (Bill Trosten will supply a complete list of names and titles.)

THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE PASSION PLAY - Schwaighofer reported that probably 70% of Oberammergau's population is pro-Daisenberger for both practical and "ideological" reasons. There are about 420 people who presently support the Rosner version. On the basis of a German version of the AJC

study of the text, and our last letter to the Burgerinitiative group which summarized our objections to Daisenberger, the OPP group said, Mayor Zwink and the Gemeinrat assigned Hans Maier, the new editor, to revise Daisenberger so that it would conform as much as possible to Vatican Council II teaching.

Interestingly, throughout the entire three-and-a-half hour discussion not a single reference was made to the ADL delegation's visit in May, nor to any ADL documents.

The OPP delegation unanimously felt that it was impossible to rectify the anti-Semitic structure of Daisenberger and changes would only be cosmetic. Meanwhile, the Rosner group continues to work on their production, performing and refining scenes. They are still counting on the Daisenberger text to fail, and they plan to have their play ready as a substitute.

The OPP group strongly resents the straddling of the issue by Cardinal Ratzinger, and the silence of the Bavarian Conference of Bishops. They feel that had the Cardinal and the Bishops supported the Rosner group, there would be no question that they would prevail.

It is important for us to realize that during these months of polemic, the Daisenberger group has succeeded in portraying the Rosner group as "lapsed Catholics" (or lapsed Christians), who are not "frum," and don't go to Church. As became clear during our meeting on Thursday, 3 p.m., with Bishop Schwarzenbock, the "unfrumkeit" of many of the Rosner group could become an important factor in the Church's position in the months ahead. We will have to deal with the problem of a coalition of "lapsed Christians" and "auslander Juden" trying to change the traditional Passion Play.

SOME POSITIVE RESULTS

Nevertheless, however the final decision turns out, these significant developments did take place:

- 1) Several of the Rosner group at our meeting, said that although they obviously favor the Rosner version, they know practically nothing about Jews, Judaism, and the History of Anti-Semitism. They said that the overwhelming majority of the townspeople are in the identical state of ignorance and illiteracy about Jews. They literally pleaded with Bill and me to help them meet this need - to send them written materials in German and possibly to bring a Jewish lecturer to Oberammergau for series of talks on these subjects. Bill and I responded that AJC will certainly try to be as helpful as possible, and they would hear from us following our return. It was said, inter alia, that even though that might not influence the 1980 decision, it could be very important for the future; it would certainly be unprecedented for Oberammergau, and we agreed.

2) In response to a statement I made that the time has come "to move from polemics to dialogue" - deep and serious communication about the fundamental historic and theological issues that Oberammergau represents - Hannes Berger proposed that Bill and I meet with the leaders of the Bavarian Catholic Academy to explore the possibility of their sponsoring a seminar on these themes.

We responded affirmatively, and Berger immediately arranged an appointment for us the next morning with the President of the Academy, Prof. Henrich, and four faculty members (one of whom was a Lutheran scholar.) It turns out that the Bavarian Academy is the most prestigious academic institution of the Catholic Church in Bavaria, its theological "Brookings Institute."

After an excellent, high-level discussion that lasted through lunch, President Henrich acted at once to sponsor the Institute. Its theme would be "The Passion of Jesus - Yesterday and Today." Papers would be presented by major Catholic and Jewish scholars on Biblical, Historical, and Theological aspects of the Passion Plays, as well as on "Their Current Implications for Anti-Semitism Today and for Jewish-Christian Relations."

November 11-12, 1978 were proposed as dates. The conference would be held at the Ettal Monastery school, four kilometres from Oberammergau. Some 200-300 key people from Oberammergau would be invited to attend, from both Daisenberger and Rosner factions. The Bavarian Academy will pay all expenses for travel, honoraria, room and board. They would want three or four scholars from the United States to discuss "The Meaning of Oberammergau in the United States." They will welcome our co-sponsorship but will also want possibly a "religious" partner. (In the past, they sponsored similar institutes with Hebrew University, with Prof. Shmar-yahu Talmon, Zvi Werblowsky, Sholomo ben-Chorin as participants. They may need some financial aid from AJC to help cover the American involvement.)

Needless to say, Bill and I regarded this development as a major breakthrough, and we would like to discuss this with you as soon as possible.

3) On Thursday afternoon, July 20, 3 p.m., we met with Bishop Schwarzenbock, chairman of the Ecumenical Commission of the Bavarian Catholic Bishops. He expressed the personal regrets of Cardinal Ratzinger who was away from the city on other commitments. At this meeting, held at the Cardinal's Chancery in Munich, there were also two other priests and two laymen present. The Bishop, who was cordial and empathetic, asked us to present our concerns about Oberammergau, which we did. He indicated that the Cardinal and he were in regular communication with the Oberammergau leadership, meaning mainly Mayor Zwink and the local pastor, and that they strongly indicated that they expect the revised text to be conformed to the positions articulated on Jews and Judaism

in the Vatican Council II Declaration, Nostra Aetate. The Bishop reported that the Oberammergau leadership promised to make available to the Cardinal a proposed revised text, probably by December.

I presented to the Bishop a copy of the American Catholic Bishops' statement on Passion Plays, which sets norms for the future production of Passion Plays with a view toward modifying their anti-Jewish impact. Since the Bavarian Catholic Bishops Conference was meeting in September 1978, I asked whether they might consider adopting a similar statement. The Bishop said he would read it and would certainly consider it, although there was not much time left to prepare the groundwork for such a statement by September.

It is clear that Cardinal Ratzinger, and his Bishop, want to avoid any public confrontation with Oberammergau over this issue, since there is already much polarization, pitting Catholics against Catholics. They clearly seem to want to play a reconciling role between the factions, and will probably press for maximum revisions of the Daisenberger text. It is quite possible that the Cardinal will also make some positive statement about Catholic-Jewish relations as a means of limiting whatever negative effects a Daisenberger production might lead to.

We informed the Bishop of our planned symposium with the Bavarian Catholic Academy. He seemed both surprised and interested. Bill and I had the impression that he welcomed that development, since it could help get the Cardinal somewhat off the hook of dealing publicly with a Daisenberger text. We are considering inviting the Cardinal, in fact, to make a statement at the November 11 and 12th meeting in Ettal at the Bavarian Catholic Academy symposium.

4) Hannes Berger indicated that his paper was planning a stepped-up publicity campaign against the Daisenberger text during the months of August and September. Bavarian Radio is also planning an hour-long documentary on Oberammergau with interviews taken in that village and from Catholic and Jewish scholars.

Attached is a copy of the letter that I have sent to Prof. Henrich indicating that AJC is prepared to cooperate actively with his academy in the sponsorship of the Ettal Symposium in November.

MHT:RPR

Abraham

The American



Jewish Committee

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N Y 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N Y

November 29, 1978

His Eminence
Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger
The Archbishop of Munich and Freising
Kardinal-Faulhaber-Strasse 7
8 Munich
Federal Republic of West Germany

Your Eminence,

I have just returned to the United States after having had the privilege of taking part in the Symposium devoted to the theme, "The Passion of Jesus - Then and Now," held on November 19th at the Bavarian Catholic Academy under the brilliant leadership of Dr. Franz Henrich.

While I have had the good fortune of participating during the past quarter-century in literally hundreds of conferences and symposia, I can recall few that could compare with that which Dr. Henrich conceived and directed last Sunday.

Given the sensitivity of the subject and its deep spiritual and human significance to both Christians and Jews, I cannot possibly imagine its being handled with greater objectivity, high quality of scholarship, and mutual respect than the manner that characterized every aspect of the Bavarian Catholic Academy's sponsorship.

In view of the fact that you are the Episcopal Moderator of the Academy, I hold this to be a genuine tribute to the high intellectual standards and moral inspiration which you assuredly provide the Academy, and I congratulate you most heartily for that achievement.


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As you undoubtedly know from the newspaper reports and possibly other accounts, the majority consensus of the Symposium was overwhelmingly opposed to the Daisenberger text of the Oberammergau Passion Play and its fundamentally anti-Jewish content and called for a Passion Play that was far truer to the authentic spirituality of the Passion of Jesus as formulated in the Council of Trent and the Second Vatican Council.

I sincerely trust that under your spiritual guidance that such an ennobling result will finally be possible in 1980.

Again, with deepest personal appreciation and warmest good wishes for God's richest blessings over you, I am,

Faithfully yours,


Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT.RPR

Enclosure

Personality Paper

bc: Bert Gold
Selma Hirsh
Zach Shuster
Miles Jaffe
Mort Yarmon
Richard Weiss
Franz Henrich
Gene Fisher
Alois Fink
Bill Trosten
Dr. Schwaighofer

JTA daily news bulletin

OPP. (R)

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Tuesday, October 31, 1978

No. 207

SYMPOSIUM IN BAVARIA ON PASSION PLAY

CAMBRIDGE, Mass., Oct. 30 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Committee announced that a leading Catholic academic institution in Bavaria, West Germany, would sponsor a symposium of Catholic and Jewish scholars in Munich next month on the relationship of the Oberammergau Passion Play to the development of anti-Semitism in Germany and in Christian culture. The symposium, which will be held Nov. 10, will be sponsored by the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in cooperation with the AJCommittee's Interreligious Affairs Department.

Announcement of the symposium was made by Miles Jaffe, chairman of the AJCommittee's Interreligious Affairs Commission, at the annual meeting of the Committee's National Executive Council. Last July, Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, AJCommittee national director of interreligious affairs, and William S. Trosten, AJCommittee's director of development, met with Dr. Franz Henrich, president of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, on the Oberammergau Passion Play issue. At that time, the AJCommittee leaders suggested that a dialogue among Catholic and Jewish scholars on the historical and theological issues represented in the Passion Play could prove helpful, and the Academy subsequently decided to sponsor a symposium on the subject.

Tanenbaum will present one of the major papers at the symposium. He has also been invited to speak in the village of Oberammergau following the symposium on the religious and historical factors that have contributed to anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere. It is believed that never before has a Jewish spokesman been invited to address a public gathering in Oberammergau on anti-Semitism and Jewish-Christian relations.

Outlining the significance of the symposium, Jaffe pointed out that this will be the first time in the history of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which dates back to 1634, that a German Catholic group of such prestige has taken the initiative in cooperation with a Jewish body to examine the root causes of anti-Semitism engendered by certain accounts of Jesus' death, including Passion Plays. More than 20 years ago, the AJCommittee made an exhaustive analysis of the script then used in the play's performance and concluded that it was a highly anti-Semitic document.

OVER PLEASE.

6-10-31-78

INTERRELIGIOUS SYMPOSIUM WILL STUDY OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY (340)

CAMBRIDGE, Mass (NC) — The Catholic Academy of Bavaria, in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Department, will sponsor a symposium of Catholic and Jewish scholars in Munich, West Germany The Nov 19 symposium will study the relationship of the Oberammergau Passion Play to the development of anti-Semitism in Germany and in Christian culture

The announcement of the symposium was made by Miles Jaffe, chairman of the Interreligious Affairs Commission, at the annual national meeting of its executive council in Cambridge, Mass Oct 26-29

The American Jewish Committee has long been concerned with the effect of the Oberammergau Passion Play, and derivative Passion Plays given in other parts of the world, on Jewish-Christian relations, Jaffe said Last July, Rabbi Marc H Tanenbaum, AJC's national director of interreligious affairs, and William S Trosten, AJC director of development, met with Franz Henrich, president of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, on the Oberammergau Passion Play issue

Rabbi Tanenbaum will present one of the major papers at the symposium He has also been invited to speak in the village of Oberammergau following the symposium on the religious and historical factors that have contributed to anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere It is believed to be the first time a Jewish spokesman has been invited to address a public gathering at Oberammergau on anti-Semitism and Jewish-Christian relations

Jaffe said, "This will be the first time in the history of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which dates back to 1634, that a German Catholic group of such prestige has taken the initiative in cooperation with a Jewish body to examine the root causes of anti-Semitism engendered by certain accounts of Jesus' death, including Passion Plays More than 20 years ago, the AJC made an exhaustive line-by-line analysis of the script then used in the play's performance It concluded that it was a highly anti-Semitic document "that could not help but contribute to the misunderstanding of Jews and Judaism "'

Over the centuries at least five different versions of the play have been produced

OVER PLEASE.....

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THEODORE FREEDMAN

June 14, 1978

Rev. John F. Steinbruck
Pastor, Luther Place Memorial Church
1226 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Rev. Steinbruck:

In response to your letter of May 30 regarding Oberammergau, as Sol Bernards indicated we met with the leadership of the Oberammergau community to discuss with them the problems related to the Passion Play. You probably are aware that there is a current controversy in Oberammergau over two different Passion Play texts. We had indicated to the Mayor and to others in that community that we were not advocating one play or text over another but rather our concern regarding the impact of all Passion Plays.

I'm taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of the release that we prepared which fairly well and yet briefly highlights the results of our visit to Oberammergau. Should you need additional information, I would be more than happy to provide you with a much more detailed memorandum that I prepared for internal use. Regarding the proposed Lutheran-Catholic action-appeal that you describe in your letter, I see nothing wrong with your doing so. I would suggest however that it is important for Lutheran and Catholic organizations and church hierarchy to communicate to the leadership of Oberammergau the need for meaningful changes in the script. I would make one final suggestion and that is not to get trapped into the controversy of the right script or the wrong script. Neither one is pristine pure and Jews would have to object to either of the scripts.

I do appreciate your interest in this matter and would welcome the opportunity of discussing this problem with you in greater detail.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

TF
Theodore Freedman

TF mef
enc



GEMEINDLICHE FREMDENVERKEHRSEINRICHTUNGEN

Gemeindl. Fremdenverkehrseinrichtungen 8103 Oberammergau

The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 Street

New York, N.Y. 10022

Ihr Zeichen

Ihre Nachricht vom

Unser Zeichen II-Os/Gü. Tag 12. April 1978

Sehr geehrte Herren!

Wir haben uns erlaubt, Ihren Brief vom 31. März 1978, der als Antwort auf den offenen Brief der Bürgerinitiative Passionsspiele 1980 zu verstehen ist, zuständigkeitshalber an die Bürgerinitiative weiterzuleiten.

Der offene Brief der Bürgerinitiative Passionsspiele 1980 war keine Sache der Gemeinde oder des Gemeinderates. Er war auch keine offizielle Stellungnahme der Gemeinde Oberammergau.

Ungeachtet dessen haben wir Ihre Zeilen vom 31. März 1978 aber mit Aufmerksamkeit zur Kenntnis genommen. Ihre Äußerung wird jedenfalls auch Gegenstand der Beratungen über die Frage sein, welche Fassung des Passionsspieles (Daisenberger oder Rosner) 1980 aufgeführt wird.

Hochachtungsvoll
Die Werkleitung

(Z w i c k)
1. Bürgermeister

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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

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31. März 1978

An den Gemeinderat von Oberammergau
Bürgerinitiative Passionsspiele 1980
8103 Oberammergau
BRD

Sehr geehrte Herren,

Ihren offenen Brief über das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel haben wir erhalten. Ihre Meinungsäußerung war uns willkommen, denn wir sind überzeugt, dass die schwerwiegenden Probleme, die das Passionsspiel stellt, sich nur durch ehrliche Auseinandersetzung zwischen allen, die die Sache angeht, einer Lösung näher bringen lassen.

Ich muss Ihnen zunächst in aller Offenheit sagen, dass mich Ihr Ton und manche der aus dem Brief zu ziehenden Folgerungen mit Unwillen erfüllt haben. Da aber Verzeihen zu den Haupttugenden des biblischen und rabbinischen Judentums gehört (in dem ja auch Jesus und die Jünger aufgewachsen sind und in dem die frühchristliche Kirche entstand), will ich allen Verdruss beiseite lassen und mich sachlich zu den verschiedenen in Ihrem Briefe angeschnittenen Fragen äußern.

Das American Jewish Committee hat keinerlei "Einmischung in die inneren Angelegenheiten" Oberammergaus gesucht. Bei unsern Besprechungen dort wie auch in unsern Mitteilungen an die Presse haben wir immer wieder betont, dass wir das Passionsspiel als eigene künstlerische Schöpfung des Dorfes Oberammergau zu achten wissen. Als eine der ersten Organisationen, die sich in den Vereinigten Staaten für Menschenrecht und Bürgerfreiheit eingesetzt haben, haben wir von jeher jede Form von Zensur und jede Beschränkung der freien Meinungsäußerung bekämpft.

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Wie aber jeder weiss, der sich in der Geschichte demokratischer Freiheit auskennt, sind mit freier Meinungsäusserung nicht nur Rechte, sondern auch Pflichten verbunden. Die verschiedenen Konventionen der Vereinten Nationen gegen Rassen- und Religionsdiskrimination verurteilen alle öffentlichen Äusserungen, durch die "Hass, Gewalttätigkeit oder Intoleranz" gegen irgendwelche Rassen-, Religions- oder Volksgruppen auf der Welt angefacht werden könnte. Bürger von Ländern, die die Konventionen unterzeichnet haben, sind verpflichtet, dies Grundprinzip der Achtung für den Glauben und die Glaubenstradition anderer zu befolgen.

Es ist bei allem Respekt für das Passionsspiel als Schöpfung Oberammergaus eine unausweichliche Tatsache - eine der "wahren Gegebenheiten", die Sie uns berechtigterweise zu berücksichtigen bitten - dass das Spiel nicht nur eine "innere Angelegenheit" ist, die nur die Ortsbewohner angeht. Wie Sie in Ihrem offenen Brief, sichtlich mit Stolz und Befriedigung, feststellen, haben es "Millionen Menschen... in den vergangenen 128 Jahren tief bewegt verlassen." Nach Ihren Pressemeldungen haben es allein im Jahre 1970 etwa 500,000 Menschen aus 113 Ländern gesehen.

Das Passionsspiel ist also, wie Sie selbst hierdurch zugehen, zu einem internationalen Ereignis geworden. Seine moralische, religiöse und soziale Wirkung ist eine Frage von Bedeutung weit über die Dorfgrenzen hinaus. Oberammergau hat mit Erfolg für sein Passionsspiel als internationale künstlerische Leistung geworben, um ein immer grösseres Publikum aus allen Weltteilen anzuziehen. Gerade Ihr Erfolg verbietet es unserer Ansicht nach, kritische Äusserungen von Personen ausserhalb Ihres Dorfes als "Einmischung" abzutun.

Und nicht nur das. Wegen seiner internationalen Bedeutung wird das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel weithin als eine Art Symbol oder Barometer angesehen, an dem man nicht nur die Haltung der Oberammergauer Bürger gegenüber dem Antisemitismus, dem jüdischen Volk, dem lebendigen jüdischen Glauben und dem demokratischen Prinzip abzulesen glaubt, sondern die Haltung ganz Bayerns oder des heutigen Deutschlands überhaupt.

Sie meinen, wir hegten Zweifel an der Demokratie in Ihrem Lande. Wir hegen sie nicht. Aber es wäre unverhältnissmässig von uns wie von Ihnen, die Existenz derartiger Zweifel in den westlichen Ländern ausser Acht zu lassen. Wenn Oberammergau sich entschlossen weigert, die Punkte, die wir Ihnen vorgelegt haben, zu berücksichtigen, so kann das die Zweifel nur verstärken.

Was Sie über eine Boykottandrohung von uns aussagen, verstehen wir nicht. Das American Jewish Committee hat nichts derart ausgesprochen. In seiner ganzen Geschichte hat es samt seinen Zweigstellen in Europa, Mittel- und Südamerika und dem Nahen Osten weder Boykotte inszeniert noch sie unterstützt. Wir haben versucht, Sie darauf hinzuweisen, dass in Amerika und anderswo katholische und protestantische Gruppen sowohl wie jüdische eine Aufführung der Daisenberger-Dedlerschen Fassung als höchst anstössig empfinden würden: als einen Schlag gegen die heutigen Auffassungen über christlich-jüdische Beziehungen, die sich auf die gründlichste Bibel- und Geschichtsforschung und auf allgemeingültige Grundsätze des Menschenrechts stützen. Aber das ist keine Boykottandrohung.

Was wir Ihnen mitgeteilt haben, findet Bestätigung in ungünstigen Äusserungen über den Daisenbergerschen Text von den höchsten Stellen der katholischen Hierarchie und von leitenden Persönlichkeiten der protestantischen Kirchen in Amerika, Deutschland und andern Ländern. Die Frage ist also nicht, ob wir einen eventuellen Boykott mitmachen würden; die Frage ist, was die Welt zu einer Aufführung der Daisenbergerschen Fassung 1980 sagen würde. Wir glauben, sie würde vielerorts scharf verurteilt werden, zumal man eine Aufführung des Rosnerschen Textes erwartet hatte.

Wie Sie feststellen, sind wir der Ansicht, dass das Daisenbergersche Passionsspiel antisemitische Einstellungen fördert. Dass Sie aber behaupten, wir hätten für unsere Kritik keine "Einzelheiten und Begründungen" angeführt, ist uns schwer verständlich. Mehrere Monate vor der Aufführung 1970 haben wir den damals leitenden Stellen in Oberammergau eine ausführliche Untersuchung übersandt, in der der verbesserte Text Zeile für Zeile mit dem für 1960 verglichen war. In diesem wissenschaftlich fundierten Dokument sind die

Gründe für unsere Kritik in allen Einzelheiten belegt. Ja, im Jahre 1970 hat die Gemeinde Oberammergau selbst einen Band zur Verteidigung des Textes herausgegeben, der darauf hinauslief, die in unserer Untersuchung aufgeworfenen historischen, theologischen und biblischen Fragen zu beantworten.

Sie fordern uns auf, "jüdische Vorstellungen und Kritikpunkte" über den Daisenbergerschen Text vorzulegen. Wir sind dazu gern bereit und legen diesem Brief mehrere Exemplare unserer Untersuchung bei (Oberammergau 1960 and 1970: A Study in Religious Anti-Semitism). Wir hoffen, Sie werden unsere Dokumentation genau durchsehen und besonders die Zusammenfassung auf Seite 18 beachten, wo es heisst:

"Die verhältnismässig geringfügigen Veränderungen, durch die das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel [von 1960] mit heutigem Denken in Einklang gebracht werden soll, ändern nichts an der grundlegenden Tatsache, dass das Spiel eine tief eingeffeischte negative Einstellung gegenüber der jüdischen Religion und dem jüdischen Volk widerspiegelt - - eine Einstellung, die durch gewisse christliche Traditionen konserviert worden ist."

Wir möchten Sie auch auf Seite 17 verweisen, wo wir bemerken: "Alles in allem geht die Bearbeitung des Passionsspiels für 1970 nicht annähernd weit genug, um unbegründete judenfeindliche Teile durchweg zu beseitigen." Wir führten dort im einzelnen an:

"Wie frühere Fassungen, so zeichnet auch der Text für 1970 die Gegner Jesu als fast untermenschliche, teuflische Kreaturen.

"Die jüdische Religion zu Jesu Zeiten wird fälschlich als gnadenlos, verderbt und wertlos dargestellt.

"Die Juden erscheinen sämtlich als Feinde Jesu. Sie sollen die Schuld an seinem Tode wissentlich auf sich ihre Nachkommen herabgerufen haben, und seien deshalb auf ewig von Gott verworfen.

"Der Charakter des Pilatus und die historischen Tatsachen über ihn sind verfälscht, und die Rolle des Kreuzigers wird anstatt den Römern den Juden zugeschoben.

"Der Text sagt nichts über die Bedrückung durch die Römer, die für das Drama von Jesu Leben und Wirken den Hintergrund bildet. Ohne diesen Hintergrund sind aber die Handlungen der Gegner Jesu nicht verständlich."

Unsere Untersuchungen der verschiedenen Texte und die eben angegebenen Kritikpunkte haben uns zu der Uebersetzung geführt, dass in Daisenbergers Text die angebliche Kollektivschuld aller Juden an Jesu Tod ein durchgehendes Leitmotiv bildet. Wir wünschten, dies feindselige Thema liesse sich daraus beseitigen, aber weder wir noch die christlichen Sachverständigen, die die Frage untersucht haben, glauben dass dies möglich ist, ohne den Daisenbergerschen Text selbst zu zerstören.

Wir möchten nochmals betonen, dass unsere Auffassung über die Thematik des Daisenbergerschen Texts nicht nur eine jüdische ist. Wir denken in diesem Zusammenhang zunächst an Nostra aetate, die grundlegende Erklärung des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils über das Verhältnis der Kirche zu nichtchristlichen Religionen und über katholisch-jüdische Freundschaft. Ferner verweisen wir Sie auf Seite 20-22 unserer Untersuchung, wo eine offizielle Proklamation des katholischen Klerus in den Vereinigten Staaten über Passionsspiele sowie Aeusserungen von katholischen und protestantischen Gelehrten wörtlich zitiert sind. Diese kritischen Beobachtungen decken sich mit unsern Ansichten. Dasselbe gilt für viele Aeusserungen in der allgemeinen und der religiösen Publizistik. Wir legen hier einige Artikel aus der amerikanischen Presse bei; sie beziehen sich auf die neusten Erklärungen, die die National Conference of Catholic Bishops und das protestantische National Council of Churches am 17. Februar dieses Jahres abgegeben haben. Der Daisenbergersche Text wird dort allgemein missbilligt und abgelehnt, und diese Missbilligung lässt sich offensichtlich nicht als eine blosser Spezialangelegenheit des jüdischen Volkes beiseiteschieben.

Die Meinungsverschiedenheit zwischen uns und Ihnen ist in Ihrem Brief in einem einzigen Satz zusammengefasst. Sie schreiben: "Wir verstehen ... nicht, warum jüdische Organisationen gegen Passionsspiele sind, obwohl ihr Volk doch

dadurch ausgezeichnet wird." Die Auszeichnungen, die wir im Laufe der Jahrhunderte durch die Vorstellung von einer kollektiven jüdischen Blutschuld am Tode Jesu und von einem damit verbundenen "ewigen Fluch" gewonnen haben, waren Hass, Verfolgung, Blutvergiessen und zuletzt Völkermord. Dachau und Auschwitz sind die erschütternden Zeugen dieser Entmenschlichung des jüdischen Volkes.

Seit dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil hat die christliche Welt zum grössten Teil diese Wahrheit anerkannt. Wir fragen: Wann werden auch Sie in Oberammergau sie endlich anerkennen?

In Ihrer Probeaufführung der Rosnerschen Fassung sahen wir einen ehrlichen Versuch, der christlichen Auffassung über Sünde und Erlösung sowie den Lehren Jesu über Liebe und Glauben aufrüttelnden künstlerischen Ausdruck zu verleihen. Wir und die meisten Christen, die sich ernsthaft mit der Geschichte der religiösen Differenzen zwischen Juden und Christen beschäftigt haben, sind untereinander einig, dass die Vorstellung einer Kollektivschuld der Juden mit diesen Lehren im Widerspruch steht. Und die Kollektivschuld ist das Leitmotiv in der Daisenbergerschen Fassung; in der Rosnerschen ist sie es nicht.

Oberammergau hat das Recht, trotz alledem die Daisenbergersche Fassung aufzuführen; aber in dem Fall hätten andre Christen sowohl wie Juden ihrerseits das Recht, aus einer solchen Entscheidung ihre eignen Schlüsse zu ziehen.

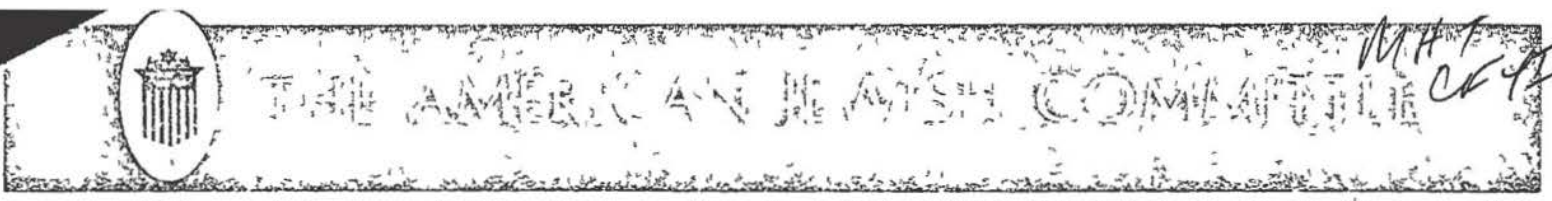
Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE



Rabbiner Marc H. Tanenbaum
Chef für Ökumenische und
jüdisch-christliche Angelegenheiten

MHT/BJB



Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N Y 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom N Y

19. October 1978

Herrn
Hans Schwaighofer
Kircheckgasse 12
8103 Oberammergau
Federal Republic of Germany

Sehr geehrter Herr Schwaighofer:

Bedanke mich herzlich fuer Ihren Brief vom 3.10.78 mit der Einladung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft sowie der Liste der Oberammergauer die eingeladen werden sollten.

Fuer unsere Besprechung am 20.11. Brauchen wir einen Projektor* einen Plattenspieler und eine Leinwand. Als Muster, lege ich einen Filmstreifen bei.

Beueglich der gebrauchten Zimmer 19.11 und 20.11, die zwei bestellten Zimmer sind nicht ausreichend. Wir gebrauchen fuenf Zimmer:

- a.) Herr und Frau William S. Trosten
- b.) Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
- c.) Herr Miles Jaffe
- d.) Herr Karlheinz Koepcke
- e.) Herr Richard Weiss

Auch wir hoffen dass die Veranstaltung eine gute Sache wird

Mit freundlichen Gruessen verbleibe ich

Ihr

William S. Trosten
Director of Development

WST/bjb
*

Der Projektor muss ein (FILM STRIP) Filmstreifen Projektor sein.

RICHARD MAASS President ■ MAYNARD I WISNER Chairman Board of Governors ■ MORTON K BLAUSTEIN Chairman National Executive Council ■ HOWARD I FRIEDMAN Chairman Board of Trustees ■ GERARD WEINSTOCK Treasurer ■ LEONARD C YASCEN Secretary ■ ROBERT L HOROWITZ Associate Treasurer ■ THEODORE ELLENOFF Chairman Executive Committee ■ Honorary Presidents MORRIS B ABRAHAM LOUIS CAPLAN IPVING H ENGEL ARTHUR J GOLDBERG PHILIP E HOFFMAN ELMER L WINTER ■ Honorary Vice Presidents NATHAN APPLEMAN RUTH R GODDARD JACK A GOLDFARB ANDREW GOODMAN EMERY E KLINEMAN JAMES MARSHALL WILLIAM ROSENWALD ■ MAX M FISHER Honorary Chairman National Executive Council ■ MAURICE GLINERT Honorary Treasurer ■ JOHN SLAWSON Executive Vice President Emeritus ■ Vice Presidents STANFORD M ADELSTEIN Rapid City SD JORDAN C BAND Cleveland EDITH S COLIVER San Francisco DAVID HIRSCHPORN Baltimore RAYMOND F KRAVIS Tulsa ALFRED H MOSES Washington DC ELAINE PETSCHKE Westchester MERVIN H RISEMAN New York RICHARD E SHERWOOD Los Angeles SHERMAN H STARR Boston ELISE D WATERMAN New York ■

The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N Y. 10022
PLaza 1-4000

Date 8/4

TO MARC TANENBAUM

FROM PAUL SCHIEBER (Trends Analyses)

For approval

For your information

Please handle

Please talk to me about this

Read and file

Returned as requested

Your comments please

Remarks:

This appeared in the right-wing, anti-Semitic National Vanguard.

Passion Play National Vanguard, Aug 1978 p 2

Passion Play Villagers Show Courage, Defy Latest Jewish Censorship Attempt

The villagers of Oberammergau, in Alpine Bavaria, have defied threats and protests from powerful Jewish organizations to keep the traditional text of their world-famous Passion Play. The proposed alternative text would have eliminated the Biblical Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ.

Supported by the local conservatives, the town council voted earlier this year to replace the text by local priest Joseph Daisenberger, which has been used since 1860. The vote came after the American Jewish Committee (AJC) and other Jewish groups threatened to organize a worldwide boycott against the village.

Outraged citizens then began a campaign to throw out the town council. "Defend against the unbelievable attempted pressure by a few Jews," one election leaflet declared. "Germans are not second-class human beings."

Prominent villagers distributed an open letter to Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum of the AJC which denounced "every interference in the private affairs of the village" and protested that "Jewish groups want to dictate what will be performed in Oberammergau."

Between 1960 and 1970, the village of 5,000 tried to accommodate the Jews by removing or watering down the strongest anti-Jewish text passages. But a 50-page protest by the AJC considered the changes only "minor revisions in the thoroughly anti-Jewish phraseology."



THE VILLAGE of Oberammergau. Its residents have given notice to the forces of international Jewry that they will not be blackmailed.

"There are, however, hard words against the Jews in parts of the Bible," Passion Play director Anton Preisinger pointed out. The Jewish responsibility for the death of Christ is based especially upon the Gospels of John ("and he saith unto the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away with him, crucify him") and Matthew ("Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus, which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. His blood be on us and on our children.")

In March, candidates supporting the Daisenberger text won 75 per cent of the vote in a special election. The new town council decided 12 to 5 to keep the traditional version.

In June, the National Conference of Christians and Jews (NCCJ) responded by announcing

a boycott against the village. The New York-based, Jewish-run organization said it would discourage Americans from attending the 1980 pageant and would mobilize demonstrations in Europe unless the villagers give in.

"If it appears that the 1980 play will use the anti-Semitic script which Adolf Hitler praised in the 1930's," the NCCJ president declared, "we will do whatever we can to create an international boycott and significantly reduce the 1970 attendance of 530,000."

The Oberammergau Passion Play was first performed in 1633. Village residents reenact the last days and crucifixion of Jesus every ten years as an act of thanks for deliverance from a ravaging plague. The Play is performed in the world's largest open-air theater.

To: Rabbi Tanenbaum

4. October 1978

Dr. Pierre Scherer
Wiss. Assistant
Katholische Akademie in Bayern
8 Munchen 40
Mandlstrasse 23
Federal Republic of Germany

Sehr geehrter Dr. Scherer:

Ich bedanke mich fuer Ihren Brief v. 20.9.78. Nach unserem letzten Telefongespraech hat Rabbi Tanenbaum nochmal mit Professor Talmun gesprochen. Ich bedauere Ihnen mitzuteilen dass auch der neue Termin - 19.11.78 ist ihm unguenstig.

Anbei sind unsere Vorschlaege fuer Gespraechspartner und Referante fuer Position IV (Moeglichkeiten und Grenzen der kuenstlerischen Darstellung der Passion Jesu).

Als Referant empfehlen wir Ihnen:

- a) Professor Lou Silberman
- b) Professor Uriel Tal

Professor Talmun ist einverstanden mit den Vorschlaegen und alle Herren sind deutschsprechend.

Wir wuerden gerne mit entweder Prof. Silberman oder Prof. Tal sprechen und auch die entsprechenden Reiseunkosten uebernehmen.

Wir erwarten Ihre Entscheidung.

Mit freundlichen Gruessen

Ihr

William S. Trosten
Director of Development

WST/BJB
Encl.

PROPOSED LIST OF GERMAN SPEAKING JEWISH SCHOLARS

FOR BAVARIAN CATHOLIC ACADEMY SYMPOSIUM, NOVEMBER 19, 1978

Prof. Alexander Altman
Brandeis University
Waltham, Massachusetts 02154

Dr. David Daube
University of California
Berkeley, California 94720

Prof. W. D. Davies
(Duke University,
Durham, North Carolina 27706)
34 Rue Wimpferling
67000 Strasbourg, France

Rabbi Jacob Petuchowski
Hebrew Union College
Jewish Institute of Religion
3101 Clifton Avenue
Cincinnati, Ohio 45220

Prof. Fritz Rothschild
Jewish Theological Seminary of America
3080 Broadway
New York, N.Y. 10027

Prof. Lou H. Silberman
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tenn. 37203

Prof. Krister Stendahl
Harvard Divinity School
Cambridge, Mass. 02138

Prof. Uriel Tal
Tel Aviv University
Tel Aviv, Israel



M.H.T.
of 41

19. October 1978

Herrn
Dr. Franz Henrich
Direktor
Katholische Akademie in Bayern
8 Muenchen 40
Mandlstrasse 23
Federal Republic of Germany

Sehr geehrter Dr. Henrich:

Ich bedanke mich fuer Ihr Schreiben vom 5.10.78 und nehme mit dem grossten Vergnuegen an, Ihre Einladung in der bevorstehenden Tagung mitzuwirken. Rabbi Tanenbaum und ich werden gemeinsam unsere Stellungnahme vorbereiten und ich selbst werde die Feststellung praesentieren.

Beueglich Ihres ruecksichtsvollen Angebots, meine Reisekosten mitzufinanzieren sowie meine Mitwirkung zu honorieren, moechte ich dankend absagen.

In den letzten Tagen erhielt ich einen Brief von Herrn Schwaighofer mit dem Inhalt einer Liste der Oberammergauer ob sie Rosner oder Daisenberger Befuerworter seien, die eingeladen werden sollten.

Wie Sie aus der beiliegenden Liste ersehen koennen, empfiehlt Herr Schwaighofer eine persoenliche Einladung fuer Herrn Heinrich Schott.

In dieser Beziehung haette ich eine persoenliche Bitte. Diese waere meinen Vetter:

Leonhard Rudolf Weitzmann
8 Muenchen 90
Klausener Platz 23

Herrn Dr. Franz Henrich

-2-

19. October 1978.

meine Schwiegermutter:

Maria Stoesser
8 Muenchen 21 Laim
Weichselbaumerstrasse 17

und meine Freunde:

Anton und Margit Ebenboeck
8 Muenchen 21 Laim
Weichselbaumerstrasse 17

zu der Tagung einzuladen.

Sollte eine Vorbesprechung noetig sein, wuerden sie mir den Termin mitteilen. 17te.11 oder 18te.11 waere fuer mich am guenstigsten.

Mit freundlichen Gruessen verbleibe ich

Ihr



William S. Trosten
Director of Development

WST/bjb



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 18, 1978
to Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
from William S. Trosten
subject

memorandum

Attached are copies of my letters to Hannes Burger and Rudiger Stolze. When you have a chance, you should prepare a list of theologians in this country who can be interviewed by Bavarian Radio in connection with the late October publicity campaign. You will recall that we promised Stolze such a list.

WST/BJB
atts.

August 18, 1978

Mr. Rudiger Stolze
Bayerischer Rundfunk
Redaktion Munchen - Oberbayern
8000 Munchen 2
Rundfunkplatz 1
West Germany

Dear Mr. Stolze:

I have just returned from vacation and would like to take this opportunity on behalf of Rabbi Tanenbaum and myself to tell you how much we enjoyed meeting you and that we felt our meetings were fruitful.

As I am certain Hannes Burger has told you, a symposium is planned for November 11th and 12th in Ettal under the auspices of the Bavarian Catholic Academy.

All of us here will be most interested in the public reaction to the Totentanz. We are currently preparing a list of people who can be interviewed here in connection with the publicity campaign we discussed for late October.

Once again, it was very nice meeting you.

Kindest personal regards.

Cordially,

WST/BJB

William S. Trosten
Director of Development

bcc: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum ✓

August 18, 1978

Mr. Hannes Burger
Suddeutsche Zeitung
Politische Redaktion
Sendlinger StraBe 80
8000 Munchen 2
West Germany

Dear Mr. Burger:

I have just returned from vacation and wanted to take this opportunity to thank you for your helpfulness and to tell you on behalf of Rabbi Tanenbaum and myself how much we enjoyed meeting you.

As you know, Rabbi Tanenbaum has been in touch with Dr. Henrich and we are hoping to finalize the agenda for the symposium when Dr. Henrich returns from vacation.

When we last had lunch, you mentioned that you would send me a complete file of your articles concerning Oberammergau for translation and distribution in this country. I look forward to receiving them.

Once again, many thanks and kindest personal regards.

Cordially,

WST/BJB

William S. Trosten
Director of Development

bcc: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum ✓

The Week in Germany



Federal Republic of Germany

Editors O Bezold, P Freedman, F Helitzer (212) 752-5020

Sept. 22, 1978

Vol. IX, #59

ON THE INSIDE ---

New Minister President in Duesseldorf ... Aviation Pioneer Messerschmitt is Dead ... Bundesbank: Economic Activity Brightens ... GNP up 2.8% in First Half ... German, French Chiefs Agree on European Monetary Unit ... Bonn, Washington Labor Ministers Expand Cooperation ... Billions in Tax Relief to Stimulate the Economy ... Good Crop Outlook in Germany ... Nuclear Foes have to pay electric bills ... German Expressionism Featured in New York ...

BUNDESTAG IS BACK, CONSIDERS 1979 BUDGET

In Bonn, the Bundestag reconvened after the summer recess. Minister of Finance Hans Matthoefter introduced the Government's budget draft for 1979, and also submitted estimates for the three following years. Tax-revenue expectations run to DM 159.5 billion next year, and will rise to DM 197.5 billion by 1982. national expenditures of DM 204.6 billion altogether are envisaged in 1979, an 8.4% increase over the current year. A net deficit of DM 35.5 billion is calculated for 1979, and the Federal Republic's accumulated national debt seems likely to top DM 270 billion by 1982.

BONN BACKS CAMP DAVID RESULTS AND CONTINUING U.S. EFFORTS

The Federal Government's appreciation to President Jimmy Carter for having called the Camp David meeting between Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat was expressed by Chancellor Helmut Schmidt in the Bundestag on September 21, together with the Government's congratulations on the outcome. He voiced support for the current U.S. efforts to arrange, through direct contacts, for the other parties to the conflict to take part in future negotiations. "Our good relations with all parties to the conflict are at the service of the search for peace", he added.

GERMAN DELEGATE RE-ELECTED TO U.N. CIVIC RIGHTS BODY

Dr. Christian Tomuschat, Professor of Public Law at Bonn University, has been elected to a four-year term by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights, a group of experts from 18 countries charged with examining the national reports submitted to the U.N. by the signatories of the 1966 International Covenant on Civic and Political Rights. These reports deal with implementation of the Covenant, and specifically with the state of civic and political rights in that particular country.

Since last year, Prof. Tomuschat has already been a member of the Commission. His election to a full term is regarded as a recognition of Bonn's efforts on behalf of civic and political rights everywhere. From January on, the Federal Republic will have representatives in three U.N. bodies directly concerned with human rights: the Commission on Human Rights; CERD, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and the Committee on Human Rights.

NEW MINISTER PRESIDENT IN DUESSELDORF: JOHANNES RAU

Johannes Rau, 47, has succeeded Heinz Kuehn as Minister President of North Rhine Westphalia, Germany's most populous state. After a dozen years in office, Kuehn resigned for health reasons. A Special Congress of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in Duisburg gave Rau the nod by 161 votes against 150 cast for State Finance Minister Diether Prosser. All 104 Landtag deputies of the SPD/FDP coalition endorsed the choice in Duesseldorf, the state capital.

The son of an Evangelical preacher, Rau has always been active in Protestant church affairs. He trained as a bookseller, then became a Protestant publisher. Elected to the City Council of Wuppertal in the Ruhr, he had advanced to the Lord Mayoralty four years later, in 1968. Within the ranks of the SPD, he rose to the state chairmanship. Considered a moderate and a pragmatist in the mold of his predecessor Heinz Kuehn, he has been North Rhine Westphalia's Minister for Science and Research since 1970.

VON WEIZSAECKER PICKED FOR BERLIN'S LORD MAYOR RACE

In a surprise development, Richard von Weizsaecker, 58, was nominated by West Berlin's Christian Democratic Union as its candidate for the city's Lord Mayoralty. The office has been a Social Democratic preserve throughout the postwar era, but the CDU believes their new standard-bearer can win by luring enough liberal-minded or resolutely Protestant voters away from the Free Democratic Party.

West Berlin's parliament, the City Assembly, is up for elections next March 18. Thereafter, it will choose a Lord Mayor. The FDP's key role was highlighted in 1975, when the last local elections took place. The CDU attracted 43.9% of the ballots, more than the SPD for the first time, but did not prevail when the Lord Mayoralty was at stake. The SPD's coalition with the FDP, which had polled 7.1% assured it of a majority in selecting the Lord Mayor.

Richard von Weizsaecker may have what it takes to attract voters not usually found in the CDU camp. Member of a distinguished family, he studied history and law after service in the wartime army. In business and banking, he attained considerable success. In 1964-70, von Weizsaecker headed the German Protestant Church's lay arm, the Evangelical Congress. Elected to the Bundestag in 1969, he now serves on the CDU Executive Board and Deputy Chairman of the Bundestag Delegation, where he is considered a member of the liberal wing.

WILLY MESSERSCHMITT DEAD: AVIATION PIONEER

At the age of 80, the renowned airplane designer succumbed to the aftereffects of a surgical operation in a Munich hospital. An engineer by training, he founded the Messerschmitt Works in Augsburg almost half a century ago, designing, developing and building many types of passenger aircraft and fighter warplanes, among them the Me-109, of which a record-setting 35,000 were produced after it broke the speed record in 1939, and the first mass-produced jet, the Me-262. In recent years he served as Board Chairman of Messerschmitt-Boelkow-Blom GmbH.

THE ECONOMIC ACCOUNT --

On Thursday, September 21, the U.S. dollar's official middle rate in Frankfurt was DM 1.9504.

BUNDESBANK REPORT: ECONOMIC SITUATION BRIGHTENS

The Federal Republic's economic situation and outlook brightened in the course of the past several months, the Bundesbank notes in its Monthly Report for September. Distinct improvements in the volume of incoming orders, together with higher capital investments by trade and industry, account for the Report's positive tone. The vigorous upturn in domestic demand during the second quarter spurred the resurgence of the economy. Foreign demand, according to the Bundesbank, no longer served as a primary stimulus. While export orders failed to decline in the second quarter, as they had in the first, a modest slowdown resulted from imports managing to expand, in terms of volume, more strongly than exports.

GNP UP BY 2.8% IN YEAR'S FIRST HALF

The Federal Republic's Gross National Product reached DM 606 billion in the first six months of 1978, an increase of 2.8% in real value and of 6.7% at current prices. Thus, the growth rate failed to meet the target of 3.5% set by the Federal Government at the end of last year but, on the other hand, did not fall as far behind as the grim forebodings of economic pessimists had predicted. In real terms, the GNP percentage growth matches that in the first six months of 1977 and exceeds that of 1977's second half by a small margin. Nominally, i.e. at current prices, the rise of 6.7% constitutes a slightly better showing than the results registered in the first and in the second half of last year.

Together with the GNP data, the Federal Statistical Agency in Wiesbaden published its findings on wages and salaries in the current year's first half. Monthly gross earnings amounted to DM 1,548 per capita, an increase of 5.8% over the earnings reported in the same period of 1977.

GERMAN, FRENCH CHIEFS AGREE ON EUROPEAN MONETARY UNIT

Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing met in Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), a German city near the Belgian border, for one of their periodic conferences. They reached full agreement on the outlines of a European currency system that they will seek to have the Common Market adopt.

On the Second German TV channel, the Chancellor voiced the belief that "we are on the point of achieving something that is of great political significance for the next twenty years, for the remainder of this century and for the further evolution of the Common Market." He stated that the European Currency System will help the U.S. Administration and the Federal Reserve Board in their efforts aimed at overcoming the inflationary erosion of the dollar and the vast deficit in the U.S. balance of trade. The European Community Finance Ministers are agreed that the European Monetary Unit, which is to serve as the basis of key exchange rates, will be named 'ECU'. This was disclosed by Federal Minister of Finance Hans Matthoefer. A majority of EC members, the Minister added, favor using the key exchange rates to create a currency framework that will make it possible to determine the point at which the central banks are to intervene.

WASHINGTON, BONN LABOR MINISTERS EXPAND COOPERATION

Cooperation between the Department of Labor in Washington and the Ministry of Labor in Bonn will be expanded, it was announced on September 12 after a Washington meeting of Labor Secretary Ray Marshall with visiting Bonn Federal Minister of Labor Herbert Ehrenberg. Information and technical collaboration is to be stepped up, it was indicated, with respect to labor and economic policy, to statistics, data banks, plant health care and occupational accident prevention to labor mobility and employment of the handicapped.

BILLIONS IN TAX RELIEF TO STIMULATE ECONOMY

To spur Germany's economy to greater activity, the Bonn Cabinet has provided it, since mid-1977, with tax relief and related benefits amounting to some DM 33.5 billion. A Government Report on economic and financial policy lists 23 pieces of legislation that have already entered into effect or are slated to do so next year. Several are still in the parliamentary process. Individual and corporate taxpayers alike are the beneficiaries. According to official computations, the various measures total DM 18.5 billion this year; an additional DM 15 billion is envisaged for 1979.

However, a boost in certain other levies, chiefly the Value Added Tax, will offset a portion of the tax benefits. The VAT was raised last January 1, and the Cabinet has endorsed a further increase that is to be applied as of July 28, 1979. Proceeds from the higher VAT are estimated at DM 6.5 billion this year and DM 3 billion next year. Together with minor changes in tax regulations, the total DM 33.5 billion relief is thus likely to be diminished by some DM 10 billion.

TOP CROP OUTLOOK IN GERMANY

One-quarter of Germany's grain harvest is still in the fields, but expert observers from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture estimate that, in the end, the farmers will bring in nearly 26 million short tons altogether, a 9.6% increase over 1977. The previous record, set in 1974, was below 25 million tons. Prospects are excellent, moreover, with regard to the vegetable, potato and fruit harvest. Vintners, however, expect to produce only 8 million hectoliter of wine this year, substantially less than the record-setting 11 million hectoliter stored in 1977.

DOLLAR SLUMPS BELOW DM 1.96

At the week's outset, the more cheerful mood engendered by the Camp David results eased the pressure on the dollar and helped it to gain more than half a Pfennig on the Frankfurt money market. As negative reactions from the Arab world multiplied, however, the rally proved short-lived and the dollar resumed its slide, moving from an official exchange rate of DM 1.9851 on Monday, Sept. 18, down to DM 1.9582 two days later. But, while the D-Mark advanced against the dollar, the rate for sfr 100 climbed to DM 124.72 on Sept. 18, a third all-time high in succession.

ROUNDUP . . .

CREDIT CARD USE ON RISE

Credit card use is increasing in the Federal Republic. Diners Club now lists 130,000 German card holders, 20,000 of them recruited this year. Eurocard, with 25,000 subscribers at the outset of 1978, has already doubled that number. American Express cards are in the hands of 100,000 Germans. Probable reason for the rising demand: the D-Mark's increased value is spurring travel abroad. Credit card companies, in the meantime, are devising new inducements for potential subscribers - mainly in the form of extending more credit and by making it easy and convenient for subscribers to obtain quick cash.

STAY-AT-HOME VACATIONS

Not every German takes to the road during vacation time. A recent survey discloses that one in four women and one in three men lack the wherewithal to leave home in order to indulge in vacation fun. In any given year, almost half of all adults stay at home. Over the last five years, stay-at-homes included 82% of all self-employed farmers who could not leave their crops, and 40% of all housewives, unskilled laborers and pensioners. In 1977, eleven million adults omitted any vacation and another seven million took vacations at home.

MICROWAVES PRESENT NO DANGER: GERMAN TRADE GROUP

German safety regulations ensure that human beings are exposed to no risk factor from microwave ovens, Germany's authoritative Central Association of the Electrotechnical Industry (ZVEI) indicates in a statement. Microwaves cannot modify cells, the ZVEI points out, in contrast to ionizing waves such as X-rays.

DM 40 FINE FOR THE UNBELTED

Beginning next April, automobile drivers who do not use their seat belts will be subject to a DM 40 fine, the Federal Traffic Ministry has announced.

BERLIN HAS LARGEST DATA BANK ON SCIENTIFIC PERIODICALS

The State Library in West Berlin edits and operates what is reported to be the largest data bank anywhere to have computerized the contents of scientific periodicals. At present, 130,000 copies of such periodicals have been processed by the data bank, a joint venture of 100 leading libraries in the Federal Republic.

NUCLEAR FOES HAVE TO PAY BILLS

Nuclear power protesters were denied the right to reduce their electric bills by 10% - the same percentage that the power company expends for nuclear fuel. In the first test case of its kind, a Hamburg court ordered a residential collective to pay the DM 312.50 they owe. The court recognized that 370 Hamburg households had instituted the boycott as a matter of conscience, but found the form of protest unauthorized under existing law.

MORE URANIUM FROM HARD-EATING BACTERIA

Rock-eating bacteria are being bred in a laboratory at the Brunswick University of Technology. The object is to produce strains which eat their way through phosphorite, the rock in which uranium seams are found. If this goal is achieved, Professors Rolf Naeveke and Wilhelm Schwartz, the microbiologists in charge, also hope to produce bacteria with a gluttonous appetite for rocks with traces of chromium, mercury, tin and tungsten. The reason is that conventional sources of these metals are also becoming scarce.

SKAT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TO TAKE PLACE IN CALIFORNIA AND NEVADA

The International Skat Players Association has opted for the American West in staging the first world championship of the most popular of German card games. Patroness of the event is Annemarie Renger, Vice President of the Bundestag and Skat fan of long standing. Some 400 German players will meet an equal number from Australia, Canada, Brazil, Holland, Belgium and France in Anaheim, California, and Las Vegas, Nevada during the first two weeks in November. The contestants qualified for the world championship by winning fifteen series of international matches. The final composition of the German team was determined by the elimination tournaments held on September 10 in Duesseldorf, where the Grand Skat Prize of Germany was at stake.

GERMAN EXPRESSIONISM IS FEATURED IN NEW YORK

Goethe House New York has launched a fall program that is devoted to 'Aspects of German Expressionism', the movement which dominated artistic life, notably in Germany, during much of the present century's first quarter. All art forms -- theater, movies, literature, music and graphic arts -- were strongly influenced by expressionism. In cooperation with New York and with City University, Goethe House arranged 4 art exhibits, the showing of 18 silent films, 10 lectures, four stage plays and two concerts.

EUROPEAN COMMUNITY NEWS



EUROPEAN COMMUNITY REACTION TO CAMP DAVID

EC reaction to the Camp David Conference sponsored by President Jimmy Carter, where Prime Minister Begin of Israel and President Sadat of Egypt reached tentative agreement, was expressed in a Statement issued in Brussels on September 19, 1978, by Foreign Affairs Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher of the Federal Republic of Germany. During the present half year, he serves as President of the EC Council of Ministers. His Statement follows:

The nine member countries of the European Community congratulate President Carter on the considerable courage he showed in keeping on course the meeting at Camp David between Sadat and Begin - and on his having brought it to a successful conclusion. The EC also commend President Sadat and Prime Minister Begin for the considerable effort the two statesmen gave to the meeting.

For years now, the 'Nine' have championed a fair, comprehensive and lasting peace arrangement in the Middle East, on the basis of Resolutions 242 and 338 of the United Nations Security Council. The attitude of the Community was expressed with absolute clarity in a statement by the Council of Europe of June 29, 1977. That resolution reflects the EC's unaltered position today. Against this background, the EC member countries welcomed President Sadat's initiative in November of last year.

The nine member governments hope the results of Camp David will prove to have been a further giant stride, a significant one, in the direction of a fair, all-embracing and permanent peace. They hope that all involved will be in a position to participate in this development, with the aforesaid goal in mind.

For their part, the 'nine' will bend all their efforts to support such a peace arrangement.

* * *

WERNER J. CAHNMAN, PH D
67-71 YELLOWSTONE BLVD
FOREST HILLS, N. Y. 11375

4/30/78

Bertram Gold
Amer. Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Str., N.Y. 10022

RECEIVED
MAY 3 1978
B H GOLD

Dear Mr. Gold:

I am a member of the AJP. It is further known that I am a native of Munich and the former Ex. Secy of the Central-Verein in Bavaria. I am well informed about the ups and downs about Oberammergau because I have friends living in the area with whom I am in correspondence. I believe it is no exaggeration to say that there is no Jewish person in America who is as thoroughly informed about Oberammergau as I am.

Consequently, when Rabbi Tammenbaum and his entourage went to Oberammergau, my friends expressed amazement that I was not a participant or a consultant. I mentioned this fact to Dave Jeller and even wrote to Rabbi Tammenbaum, with no effect. The fundamental mistake that was made was that the thing was attacked at the wrong end. The task was not to agree or disagree with passages in the new play, but to influence public opinion in the village. In the minds of the people of Oberammergau, it is not up to "foreigners," Jews, Americans or whoever, to tell them how their play should be constructed or conducted. What was to be done was to influence key persons in the village as to the merits of the new play vis-à-vis the old play, no matter whether a couple of passages in the new play were constructed one way or another. To this purpose, one needed to know

the nook and crannies of public opinion, the person to talk in this way, that way or a third way and to express oneself in a semblance of the local dialect. I used my friend in that capacity, but that was only by remote ~~control~~ ^{control} and not sufficient. Possibly, I could have done better, if I had been on the spot.

My friend was consistently more optimistic than I was. Now, he admits that everything is in a mess. The Council ~~has~~ who are the older people, have the majority in the ~~parliament~~ ^{parliament}. They are for the old play and the young people plus Mr. Schwaighofer, who are for the new play are hardly able to assert themselves. Not panacea in the new play are in question, but the new play itself. That could have been a success, if there had been cooperation, turn out to be a catastrophe.

What is to be done? I do not know. The horse is out of the stable. The only person who is capable of doing anything - if he wants to - is Franz Joseph Strauss. As you remember, I recommended contact with F. J. S. more than a year ago. I am on good terms with Strauss, but will be inclined to oppose what looks like the prevailing public opinion. That is the question. Please, do some thinking about it. If one decides to write to him, again, it must be in the kind of language that he understands.

I have an appointment with you for the 24th of May, unfortunately long delayed. But I thought I should ^{put} the Oberamsteg matter before you as soon as possible.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely,
Wernher Lehmann

February 23, 1978


Dr. Eugene Fisher
United States Catholic Conference
1312 Massachusetts Avenue N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20005

Dear Gene:

This is just a note to thank you so much for coming up from Washington to participate in the Oberammergau News Conference. I thought your remarks were cogent, scholarly and right on target. Thanks for joining us.

I am enclosing a copy of the RNS story that I know you will find of interest. Let's stay in touch, and with warm regards, I am,

Cordially yours,


Rabbi A. James Rudin
Assistant Director
Interreligious Affairs

AJR:FM
Encl.

bcc: Bert Gold
Miles Jaffe
Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum ✓

RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAIL DECISION
OF OBERAMMERGAU ON PASSION PLAY

By Religious News Service (2-17-78)

NEW YORK (RNS) -- Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish leaders have hailed the adoption of a revised version of West Germany's Oberammergau Passion Play by the town council of the Bavarian village.

By a vote of 9-6 with two abstentions, the council decided (Feb. 8) to use the 1750 text written by a Benedictine priest, Father Ferdinand Rosner, rather than the 1850 script written by a local parish priest, Father Josef Daisenberger, which has been used for the past century.

Officials of the American Jewish Committee have expressed concerns for years over the Daisenberger script, which they charged was anti-Semitic because it emphasized the idea of collective guilt of Jews in the death of Christ. The Rosner script sets forth the view that all of humanity was implicated in the crucifixion, rather than any one group.

Miles Jaffe of Detroit, chairperson of the Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Commission, had visited Oberammergau twice during the past year to discuss the matter with other Jewish leaders and the Oberammergau town council. He expressed satisfaction that the Rosner version will be used the next time the play is presented, in 1980.

At a press conference at the Jewish Committee headquarters, Mr. Jaffe said, "I believe it is difficult for them (the residents of Oberammergau) to understand how important that event, that decennial event, is elsewhere in the world." He praised the town council for giving up its century-old tradition and "taking upon itself the risk of the new, the untried," in voting to use the Rosner version.

Dr. Eugene Fisher, executive director of the Office of Catholic-Jewish Relations of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, noted that his agency has been concerned about the Oberammergau play and passion plays in general. Since the Oberammergau version "sets the tone for passion plays elsewhere," he said, the change becomes "of great significance for us in the United States."

The Rev. Nathan H. VanderWerf, executive director of the Commission on Regional and Local Ecumenism of the National Council of Churches, noted that Christian-Jewish dialogues have increased in recent years throughout the United States, and predicted that the change in the Oberammergau play will be welcomed by many groups across the country.

Asked if the change in the Oberammergau play would have a direct impact on other passion plays, Dr. Fisher said, "There's a whole world of passion plays. Each one would have to be looked at individually." But he stressed that "the criteria at all times for judging passion play within our tradition should be the Gospel narratives."

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By GEORGE W. CORNELL

AP Religion writer

NEW YORK (AP)—U. S. Christian and Jewish leaders Friday hailed a decision by the town council of Oberammergau, Germany, to replace a script for the village's world-famous passion play that has been widely criticized as anti-Jewish with a fairer version.

It's a step of "great significance," said Eugene Fisher, head of the U. S. Catholic Bishops' Office of Catholic-Jewish Relations. "We join in congratulating the people of Oberammergau with great satisfaction and great joy."

The U. S. religious representatives told a news conference at offices of the American Jewish Committee that the Oberammergau town council voted Feb. 8 to substitute a theologically more accurate version for a text used for a century, and often assailed as biased and anti-Semitic.

It portrayed the "collective guilt of Jews as the source of the death of Jesus," said Miles Jaffe of Detroit, head of the AJCI interreligious affairs commission, noting that the newly adopted version blames the "human sin of mankind as a whole."

"It's a theme all of us will be able to share," he said.

Church representatives noted that a basic Christian concept is the universal human responsibility for Jesus' death, and that believers share in the redemption only by recognizing their share in that responsibility.

The Rev. Nathan H. Vanderwerf of the National Council of Churches including most major Protestant and Orthodox denominations, said the change would be heartily welcomed by Christians in this country.

"As Christians, we must do whatever we can to eliminate the notion that Jews in any collective sense can be condemned for the death of Jesus," he said. "This is theologically unacceptable and untenable."

Leaders of the AJC have conferred with Oberammergau officials in the German Bavarian village twice in the past year, last August and again in January, about the problem. It has caused considerable ferment there as well as elsewhere. The play is produced every 10 years, and draws thousands of visitors.

For the 1980 production, the town decided to abandon the long-used text written in 1850 by a priest named Joseph Alois Daisenberger, and to substitute a play written in 1750 by a Benedictine monk, Ferdinand Rosner, the U.S. religious leaders said.

The Daisenberger script blames Jews collectively for Jesus's death, while the Rosner script sees the sin of all humanity as responsible.

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AP Religion in the News, Adv 24, 470

Adv 2+

Work release PM Fri Feb. 24

By GEORGE W. CORNELL

AP Religion Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—Ever since medieval times, Christians have been putting on "passion plays"—in churches, outdoor arenas, seminaries and public halls—about the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, some of them sound, others simplistic, distorted and villifying Jews.

But that anti-Semitic twist has been removed, religious leaders say, from the biggest attraction of them all—the passion play produced in the little Bavarian village of Oberammergau, Germany. It has been a kind of world archetype of the genre.

Although drawing thousands from around the world, the play for years has been criticized by many Bible scholars and theologians, both Jews and Christians, as falsifying fact and doctrine by blaming Jews collectively for the crucifixion of Jesus, himself a Jew.

The substantial elimination of that element by the village's recent decision to substitute a different script was praised by U. S. Christian and Jewish representatives as a broadly influential step, setting a truer, fairer pattern for passion plays.

The newly chosen presentation "centers the responsibility for Christ's death where it should be—in the sin of all humanity," says Bible scholar Eugene Fisher, head of the U. S. Catholic Bishops' Office of Catholic-Jewish Relations.

He says the change gets rid of an internationally attested portrayal that for years has been a "purveyor of prejudice and injustice." He notes that the classic Christian concept is that believers share in Christ's redemption only as they acknowledge their part in his death.

The Oberammergau play has been presented every 10 years since 1634 when it first was performed to fulfill a vow made during a plague epidemic. Now a tourist attraction, it drew 500,000 from 113 countries in 1970.

Over the more than three centuries, at least five different versions have been used, but for the last 100 years, the script has been one written by a priest named Joseph Alois Deisenberger in 1860, attributing Jesus' death to the Jews.

After drawn-out controversy about it and considerable village ferment, the town council decided Feb. 8 to use for the 1982 production a 1750 text by a Benedictine monk, Ferdinand Rosner, ascribing Jesus' death to universal human sin.

U.S. Jewish, Catholic and Protestant representatives last week jointly hailed the decision as a "major step in consolidating the improved relationships between Christians and Jews."

Miles Jaffe of Detroit, chairman of the American Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Commission, from which a delegation had twice in the last year conferred with village leaders about the problem, emphasized the change had been their decision.

He said it was made out of their conviction that the play should reflect both their long, deeply held tradition and also "the theme of love and good will which is the central teaching of Christianity."

End Adv PMs Fri Feb. 24. Sent--

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Generally speaking, I am much concerned that the real intent of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which is to serve religious awareness, not to provoke confrontation, not be put in question by conflicts of any kind whatever.

Sincerely yours,

(s) + Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger



The American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
PLaza 1-4000

Date 8/17/78

TO Rabbi M. Torenbaum
FROM: William S. Prosten

- For approval
- For your information
- Please handle
- Please talk to me about this
- Read and file
- Returned as requested
- Your comments please
- No need to return

Remarks:

Rec'd. approx. 11/8/78
Los Angeles

... who would destroy Israel. — IV AMERICAN JEWISH

ADL Wins Passion Play Changes

New York (Special) — "Drastic changes" will be made in the world famous Oberammergau Passion Play to conform with the 1974 Vatican guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations and "reconcile with the Jews without falsification of the Bible"

The announcement, made in an Oberammergau news release published in two German newspapers — the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and the Frankfurter Rundschau — and the Catholic News Service credited the changes to recommendations made by a delegation of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith leaders which met with officials of the Bavarian town last month

Among the ADL suggestions being followed are:

An expanded prologue explicitly stating that the Jews are not to be considered collectively guilty for Jesus' death revision or elimination of scenes which depict Jews in an unnecessarily harsh way, and the addition of Jews calling for the release of Jesus to the highly emotional scene in which the masses call for his death.

The changes, announced by Hans Maier, a 52 year old Oberammergau woodcutter who is the newly elected director of the Passion Play, will be made in the 1980 production

The play, put on for 12 months every decade for the past 300 years, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic

The ADL delegation, led by Nat Kameby, chairman of the national human relations agency's program committee, Rabbi Ronald B. Sobel, vice chairman, and Theodore Freedman, director of the program division, met with Oberammergau Mayor Ernest Zwink, other town leaders, and later in Rome discussed the meetings with members of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews

They were assured by Father Gorges Mejia, secretary of the Commission, that he would give the recommendations made by ADL in Oberammergau to Bishop

Carl B. Flugel, Regensburg, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Munich, both in Bavaria

Kameny said that Mayor Zwink and other Oberammergau town officials, while knowledgeable about the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," seemed unfamiliar with the 1975 Vatican Guidelines which were adopted to implement it

The Guidelines, following the principles of the Declaration which said "neither all Jews indiscriminately

Continued on Page 20

Herzog Says Arab Arms Buildup Staggers Mind

New York (Special) — By 1980, the Arab states will have more artillery than the United States, almost as many tanks, double the air power of NATO and three times that of the People's Republic of China, according to Chaim Herzog, Israel's representative to the United Nations

The "ominous question which arises," he said, "is what are they arming themselves for?"

Addressing the 65th anniversary dinner of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith at the Plaza Hotel, Ambassador Herzog warned that the Arabs' "obsession with the acquisition of seemingly

limitless weapons of destruction" should be a source of concern not only to Israel

Declaring that the massive arms transactions during the past year "exceed all previous records," he added that "there seems to be no end in sight"

He gave the following examples:

- Orders placed by Arab states since 1977 for arms to be supplied by 1980 amount to \$35 billion so far, of which \$24 billion has been expended by Saudi Arabia alone,
- The volume of Saudi military orders since 1977, even without the recent purchase of F-15's from the

Continued on Page 22

Hans Schwaighofer
Kircheckgasse 12
8103 Oberammergau

Oberammergau, 17. Mai 1978

American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street
New York, N.Y.
Mr. William S. Trosten

Sehr geehrter Herr Trosten!

Nach unserem letzten Telefongespräch habe ich mit Herrn Dr. Fink und anschließend mit dem Vorstand der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ihren Vorschlag nach Oberammergau zu kommen, um mit dem Gemeinderat oder mit der Bevölkerung zu sprechen, beraten.

Alle Beteiligten fanden diesen Gedanken ausgezeichnet und haben ihn grundsätzlich befürwortet.

Auf Grund der augenblicklichen Situation waren sie jedoch der Meinung, man sollte den Termin für dieses Gespräch auf den Herbst verlegen und gut vorbereiten.

Vorgeschlagen wurde, ein Symposium einzuberufen, dem 1 katholischer Theologe (vielleicht Herr Pfarrer Sanders) 1 evangelischer Theologe und Experten von Ihrer Seite sowie der Regionalbischof Schwarzenbock angehören.

Die Herren sollten in kurzen Statements zu den wichtigen Passions- und Textproblemen vor der Bevölkerung Stellung nehmen und darüber diskutieren.

Eine Einladung wurde von der Arbeitsgemeinschaft vorbereitet, vorbereitende Gespräche mit den betreffenden Herren konnten von Dr. Fink sowie auch von der Arbeitsgemeinschaft eingeleitet werden.

Dies wäre der Vorschlag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft.

Der neue Spielleiter, Hans Maier, hat in einer Zeitungsnotiz, die ich beilege, "wesentliche Änderungsabsichten" am Daisenbergetext bekanntgegeben. Scheinbar sind ihm die Schwierigkeiten, die dabei eintreten, nicht in vollem Umfange bekannt d.h., daß diese Absicht eine Neuschöpfung bedeuten mußte, die nicht gewollt ist.

Der Textbearbeiter verhält sich bis zur Stunde anonym. Das Ergebnis wird sich von der Textstreichung 1970 sicherlich nicht wesentlich unterscheiden.

Als Grundlage soll der Ihnen bereits zugegangene, schon mit Streichungen versehene Text verwendet werden.

Inwieweit die 'Anti-Diffamations-Liga' nach ihrem Besuch in Oberammergau auch mit Kardinal Ratzinger ins Gespräch kam, ist nicht bekannt geworden.

Die Herren wollten auch versuchen, über den Hl. Stuhl in Rom eine Nachricht an Kardinal Ratzinger zu vermitteln.

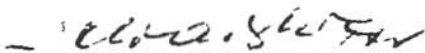
Im Bayer. Rundfunk kam gestern, 16. Mai - 18.20 Uhr, eine Meldung von einem internationalen Kongreß christlich-jüdischer Zusammenarbeit in Wien, von dem aus eine Demonstration in Oberammergau geplant ist. Amerikanische Bischöfe und jüdische Organisationen wenden sich an die Reiseveranstalter und an die Fluglinien, Oberammergau nicht in Ihr Programm aufzunehmen.

Die Meldungen über Textbearbeitung des Daisenbergetextes sind fadenscheinig, denn im Gemeinderat wurde darüber bis jetzt noch nicht beraten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

verbleibe ich

Ihr


(Hans Schwaighofer)

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'Arbeitsgemeinschaft' mit Resolution und Boykott-Warnung zur Spielwahl

Oberammergau (us) — Sollte der neue Gemeinderat die Aufführung der Daisenberger-Passion 1980 beschließen, werden die Mitglieder der „Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion“, von denen die Rosner-Probe getragen wurde, ihre Mitwirkung verweigern. Das ist der Kern einer Resolution, die nun nach einstimmiger Genehmigung durch etwa 100 anwesende Mitglieder an den Gemeinderat geht. Außerdem wurde angekündigt, daß an der Rosner-Passion weitergearbeitet werde, um die Inszenierung zu vollenden.

Auf kurzfristige Einladung der Arbeitsgemeinschaft waren über

100 Mitglieder gekommen, um sich über die Ereignisse der letzten Wochen zu informieren. Reform-Spielleiter Hans Schwaighofer verlas dazu die Antwort des „American Jewish Committee“, unterzeichnet von Rabbiner Marc H. Tannenbaum, an die Gemeinde bzw. an die „Bürgerinitiative“ auf einen Wahlkampfbrief von Werner Notz. In diesem sechseitigen Schreiben stellt Tannenbaum die grundsätzliche Stellungnahme der jüdischen amerikanischen Kirche klar.

Es wurde darin auf eine eingehende Analyse des Daisenberger-Textes vor 1970 verwiesen, die

ergeben habe, daß dieses Spiel eine tief eingefleischte negative Einstellung gegenüber der jüdischen Religion und dem jüdischen Volk widerspiegeln, eine Einstellung, die durch gewisse christliche Traditionen konserviert worden ist.

Weiterhin konnte Schwaighofer den Text einer „Monitor“-Sendung vom 28. März, die Ausstrahlung von Kardinal Ratzinger im Münchner Presseclub, den Wortlaut der Fernsehsendung aus dem Kath. Tagebuch, die Äußerungen von Bundespräsident Scheel bei der „Woche der Brüderlichkeit“, (Fortsetzung übernächste Seite)

Mit Resolution und Boykott . . .

Fortsetzung

einen Aufsatz von Professor Ziegler aus Mainz mit dem Titel „Passio nova in Oberammergau zwischen religiösem Volksspiel und religiösem Festspiel“ und verschiedene Gesprächsergebnisse bekanntgeben.

Interessant waren auch die Auszüge aus „Nostra aetate“ (II Vatikanisches Konzil), die das Verhältnis von Christen und Juden beleuchten und den Standpunkt der katholischen Kirche klarlegen.

Schwaighofers gravierendste Aussage war, daß Professor Fortner, Dr. Fink und er selbst sich klar darüber seien, daß die Rosner-Passion vollendet werde und daß auf der Basis der aufgezeigten Verbesserungsmöglichkeiten weiter gearbeitet werde und daß bereits im Mai eine Arbeitssitzung stattfindet.

Als „erschütternd“ bezeichnete es Schwaighofer, daß bei Führungen im Passionstheater den Besuchern auf Anfrage nur der Daisenbertext von 1970 vorgelegt werde. Auf die Frage nach dem Rosnertext werde aber nur die Antwort erteilt: „Den können Sie sich auf dem Müllplatz suchen.“

Die Resolution der Arbeitsgemeinschaft, die von der Versammlung ohne Gegenstimme angenommen wurde, lautet:

„Aus folgenden Gründen lehnt die Arbeitsgemeinschaft eine Aufführung des Daisenbertextes 1980 ab:

1. Das Daisenbergerspiel ist in literarischer Hinsicht dem Rosnertext weit unterlegen.

2. Der Daisenbertext entspricht zudem nicht den Forderungen des II. Vatikanischen Konzils und kann ihnen auch nicht angepaßt werden. Eine Überarbei-

tung kam einer Neuschöpfung gleich.

3. Die Rosnerprobe hat bewiesen, daß diese Fassung sowohl vom Text als auch von der Inszenierung weit aus stärker ist als das Daisenbergerspiel.

4. Die Warnungen von außen, von der katholischen und evangelischen Kirche, von der jüdischen Seite und den Massenmedien können im Interesse Oberammergaus nicht übergangen werden.

Sollte der Rosnerbeschuß dennoch umgesetzt werden, so werden die Mitglieder der Arbeitsgemeinschaft von ihrem demokratischen Recht Gebrauch machen, eine Sache die nicht überzeugt (Daisenbergefassung) und die nach Ansicht der Arbeitsgemeinschaft nur Nachteile für Oberammergau bringt, nicht zu unterstützen, d. h. Ausgaben nicht zu übernehmen.“

Passionsspiel-Reform verworfen

Neuer Oberammergauer Gemeinderat entscheidet sich für den umstrittenen Daisenberger-Text

Von unserem Redaktionsmitglied Hannes Burger

Oberammergau, 4. Mai — Mit einem Dringlichkeitsantrag hat die Mehrheit des neuen Gemeinderats bereits in der ersten der konstituierten Sitzungen die Entscheidung für das Passionsspiel 1980 zugunsten der herkömmlichen umstrittenen Daisenberger-Fassung getroffen. Ohne weitere Beratungen wurde damit — wie im Wahlkampf angekündigt — vom Anführer des Bürgermeisters Ernst Zwick der Beschluß des alten Gemeinderats aufgehoben, 1980 eine erneuerte Inszenierung der barocken Passio Nova von Ferdinand Rosner aufzuführen.

Das Thema stand nicht auf der Tagesordnung, es war gegenüber Pressevertretern für den 8. Mai angekündigt worden. Der Antrag wurde unter dem Punkt „Anfragen“ aus den Reihen des Gemeinderats eingebracht. Die aus einem ungemünzten Kommunalwahlkampf hervorgegangene Mehrheit von 12 zu 5 Stimmen für die „Daisenberger-Partei“ hat mit dieser Überwindung den jahrzehntelangen Querstreifen im Passionsspiel auf eine neue Wendung gegeben.

Der Konflikt dürfte allerdings erst seinem Höhepunkt zutreiben, da angesichts der antisemitischen Struktur des Daisenberger-Spiels weltweite jüdische und christliche Proteste zu erwarten sind. Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft „Passion“, der die meisten Mitwirkenden der Reformprobe und dem Rosner-Spiel im Jahre 1977 und damit wichtige Spielerpersonalitäten angehören, hat kürzlich angekündigt, sie werde eine Daisenberger-Aufführung nicht unterstützen und keine Aufgaben übernehmen. Ein Gemeinderat hat inzwischen eine Initiative angekündigt, wonach geeignete Spieler aus dem Dorf vom Gemein-

rat mit Rollen beauftragt und bei Ablehnung ganz von der Mitwirkung am Passionsspiel ausgeschlossen werden sollten.

Vertreter der Gemeinderatsmehrheit um Bürgermeister Zwick begründeten ihre Entscheidung für das Daisenberger-Spiel mit dem Willen der Oberammergauer Bürger, den man zu respektieren habe. Dem hielt Gemeinderat Helmut Fischer (CSU) entgegen, daß mit massiven Beeinflussungen und Tatsachenverdrängungen, speziell bei der Androhung wirtschaftlicher Folgen einer Reform, dieser sogenannte Bürgerwille erst erzeugt worden sei. „Man kann die Verantwortung jetzt nicht einfach den Bürgern in die Schuhe schieben, die man zuvor nicht sachlich aufgeklärt hat.“

Immerhin hatte nicht nur die reformbereite Minderheit in Oberammergau geraten, sich vor einer Änderung des Gemeinderatsbeschlusses für Rosner noch gründlich mit den Argumenten der Daisenberger-Gegner auseinanderzusetzen und die über das Dorf hinausreichenden Konsequenzen zu überdenken.

Zwick: „Nur ein bißchen überarbeiten“

Nach der Reformprobe 1977 hatte der für Oberammergau zuständige Regionalbischof Franz Schwanzböck gesagt, ein Weg zurück zu Daisenberger sei nicht mehr vorstellbar. Und der Erzbischof von München und Freising Kardinal Ratzinger hatte kürzlich verboten lassen, das Minimum, das er von den Oberammergauern erwarte sei eine Anpassung des Daisenberger-Textes an die Beschlüsse des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils (Erklärung über die Juden). Bürgermeister Zwick hat da offenbar andere Vorstellungen, denn er stellte lediglich in Aussicht, man wolle das Daisenberger-Spiel „ein bißchen überarbeiten“.

Die Antikristliche Jüdische Komitee (AJC) hatte dagegen bereits im Februar in einem Brief an Bürgermeister Zwick deutlich gemacht, welche grundsätzlichen Einwände von den durch Daisenbergers Stück betroffenen Juden erhoben werden. „Wir können nicht stark genug betonen, daß die Aussage bei Daisenberger das Thema der Kollektivschuld der Juden am Tode Jesu zugrunde liegt“, schrieb der Nationaldirektor des AJC, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum.

Die Vertreter der jüdischen Religion ließen auch keinen Zweifel an ihrer Auffassung, daß der Konfliktpunkt nicht in einigen unglücklichen Ausdrücken liegt, die man korrigieren könnte, sondern in dem grundsätzlichen Aufbau der Daisenberger. „Es ist unsere Auffassung, daß keine Bearbeitung, weder Streichungen noch Korrekturen und diaphanische Tricks diese (oben genannte) Tatsache überdecken können. Die Daisenberger-Version wird in unserem Lande immer als ein Ausdruck antisemitischer Geühle gesehen und als solcher abgelehnt werden.“

Darumhin hatte die Bürgerinitiative in Oberammergau, die unbeteiligt für das Daisenberger-Spiel 1980 eintritt, in einem Brief Rabbi Tanenbaum befehl, Kritik müsse auch begründet sein. „Man wunsche durch uns, bis Anfang Mai die jüdischen Vorstellungen und Kritikpunkte zu hören.“ Denn „Wir können nur Kritik berücksichtigen, die uns mitgeteilt wird.“

Die gewünschten „Kritikpunkte“ liegen seit acht Jahren im Oberammergauer Rathaus schriftlich vor. Eine christlich-jüdische Theolo-

genkommission hatte nach der letzten umkämpften Daisenberger-Aufführung 1970 alle historischen und theologischen Einwände gegen dieses Passionsspiel detailliert zusammengestellt und anhand von Beispielen aus Text und Darstellung eine eindeutig antijüdische Tendenz nachgewiesen. Wie sich aus der Sitzung vom Mittwoch nun ergibt, ist diese Studie vom Daisenberger-Anhang offenbar nicht zur Kenntnis genommen worden. Bürgermeister Zwick meinte vor der Abstimmung: „Die neuen Gemeinderäte bei unsen diese Studie nicht zu kennen.“

Noch im April hatten sich die „Gesellschaften für christlich-jüdische Zusammenarbeit“ von München, Augsburg und Regensburg sich in einem Appell an die Oberammergauer Bevölkerung gewandt. Dabei waren vor allem die Verantwortlichen im Dorf gebeten worden, „den lebendigen und selbstkritischen Dialog“ der von

Juden und Christen über die Glaubensfrage des Kreuzes zustande gekommen sei, nicht „durch überholte Einseitigkeiten“ zu gefährden. „Ihr Passionsspiel wird heute unaufführbar, wenn es mit dem Leiden des Menschensohnes nicht Schuld und Schicksal der Menschen zum Ausdruck bringt.“

Der Gemeinderat Edel in Oberammergau hingegen meint, Antisemitismus sei ein politisches Thema, und die Juden sollten sich die Frage stellen, ob es für sie gut sei „sich in christliche Glaubensfragen einzumischen“. (Siehe auch Leitartikel auf Seite 4.)

Ein Passionsspiel als Politikum

VON HANNES BURGER

Kein Hahn wurde nach dem Gezank unter dem Kirchturm von Oberammergau krahnen, wenn die volkstümliche Darstellung der Passion Jesu Christi nichts weiter wäre als naives Dorftheater. Dies ist sie aber längst nicht mehr — aus verschiedenen Gründen, deren Kumulierung aus dem Oberammergauer Passionsspiel einen Plazedenfall und Prestigestreit werden ließ. Die jüngste Entscheidung des Gemeinderates in dem 5000-Seelen-Dorf, eine bereits beschlossene Reform des Passionsspiels wieder zu verwerfen, durfte denn auch Konsequenzen haben, die weit über den Ammergauer Dorfranger hinaus politischen Ärger verursachen werden.

Dazu ist in Erinnerung zu rufen, daß das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel auf einem Gelübde des Jahres 1634 basierend im Lauf seiner fast 350-jährigen Tradition mehr und mehr zu einem kommunalen Wirtschaftsfaktor und zu einer oberbayerischen Touristenattraktion geworden ist. Dank einer geschickten Werbung zieht das wohl bekannteste Passionsspiel der Welt alle zehn Jahre rund eine halbe Million Besucher in das große Freilichttheater. In der Fremdenverkehrswerbung für Bayern und die Bundesrepublik in Übersee gehört Oberammergau in die Reihe solcher Begriffe wie Königsschloss, Bayreuth, Hofbrauhaus und Oktoberfest.

Dies ist der eine Grund dafür, daß man im Konfliktfall nicht mehr so tun kann, als handle es sich um eine kuriose gemeindeinterne Angelegenheit auf der Theaterbühne gelubdretener Holzschnitzer im Ammerthal. Der andere Grund, der das Passionsspielthema überregional interessant macht, ist die Tatsache, daß sich in den letzten zwanzig Jahren, speziell seit dem II Vatikanischen Konzil, zwischen Juden und Christen eine Verständigung angebahnt hat, die fast 2000 Jahre lang nicht vorstellbar erschien. Dazu gehört zum einen die Rückbesinnung auf die gemeinsame Wurzel in der Bibel und zum anderen die wissenschaftlichere, somit emotionslosere Aufarbeitung der Konfliktstoffe um die zunächst innerjüdische „Glaubensspaltung“ in Juden mosaischen Glaubens und in Judenchristen.

Der schwierigste Punkt in diesem Schnittpunkt der jüdischen und christlichen Religionsgeschichte ist zweifellos die Einordnung von Jesus Christus in die jüdische Messiasgeschichte, seine Beurteilung durch die religiösen Autoritäten seiner Zeit, seine Verurteilung in einem komplizierten Prozeß-Wechselspiel und schließlich seine Hinrichtung durch die römische Besatzungsmacht. Die kontroverse, emotionsgeladene und oft polemische Darstellung dieser gemeinsamen Geschichte zweier großer Religionen hat sowohl Christenverfolgungen verursacht, als auch — und dies vor allem — das religiöse Grundmotiv oder das willkommene Alibi für die

Unterdrückung und Vernichtung von Juden im christlichen Abendland abgegeben.

Diese leidvolle Erfahrung ist das für viele Menschen unverstandliche Motiv des Kampfes, den religiöse Autoritäten des Judentums gegen die weitere, unkritische Verbreitung einer „jüdischen Kollektivschuld am Gottesmord“ führen. Nach der Korrektur der offiziellen kirchlichen Verkündung ruckten halbreligiöse Publikumsveranstaltungen wie Passionsspiele in den Blickpunkt. Da aber Oberammergau das in der Welt bekannteste Passionsspiel mit den größten Besucherzahlen aufführt, lag es für die in die Sache engagierten Juden nahe, hier den Modellfall für eine auf Verständigung zielende Reform zu suchen. Als von der Interpretation ihrer eigenen Religionsgeschichte Mitbetroffene kann man ihnen deshalb nicht Einmischung in fremde Angelegenheiten vorwerfen. Außerdem teilen christliche Instanzen ihre Einwände.

Nachdem die ab 1960 im Dorf intensiv betriebenen Reformbemühungen durch Rückgriff auf ein älteres, barockes Passionsspiel aus dem Oberammergauer Tradition 1968 am Gemeinderat gescheitert waren, gab es bereits zum Passionsspiel 1970 weltweite Proteste. Die Intervention Roms wurde von Kardinal Dopfner mit dem beruhigenden Hinweis auf eine in Auftrag gegebene Überarbeitung des kritisierten Textes beantwortet, die aber von den Oberammergauer nicht ernstgenommen wurde. Dopfner verweigerte ihnen daraufhin erstmals die kirchen-offizielle Anerkennung. Die Boykottmaßnahmen jüdischer Organisationen in Amerika führten zu erheblichen Schäden für die Lufthansa und deutsche Reiseveranstalter.

In der heutigen Situation ist die Oberammergauer Entscheidung noch weit mehr ein Politikum. Die Juden lassen keinen Zweifel daran, daß die Herausforderung für sie ernst ist, die christlichen Kirchen kennen und wollen weltweite Verständigungsbemühungen zwischen den Religionen nicht durch die kommerziellen Interessen sorgloser Dorfpolitiker gefährden lassen. Für die Politik aber stellt sich die Frage, ob nicht eine internationale Debatte über Antisemitismus in Westdeutschland heute mehr Schaden für den „haßlichen Deutschen“ anrichten kann, als man einem solch unpolitischen Nebenschauplatz zuträut.

Nachdem die Erfahrung von 1970 vorliegt und eine spielbare Alternative in Oberammergau vorliegt, dürfte der nächste Konflikt hafter werden als der letzte. Und in einer internationalen Auseinandersetzung über Antisemitismus werden der Bürgermeister und der Pfarrer von Oberammergau nicht mehr die politischen und kirchlichen Gesprächspartner sein, die in der Schußlinie stehen. Auspocken müssen es andere.

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Rudiger Stölze: Das Echo von Oberammergau

12.05 - 12.30

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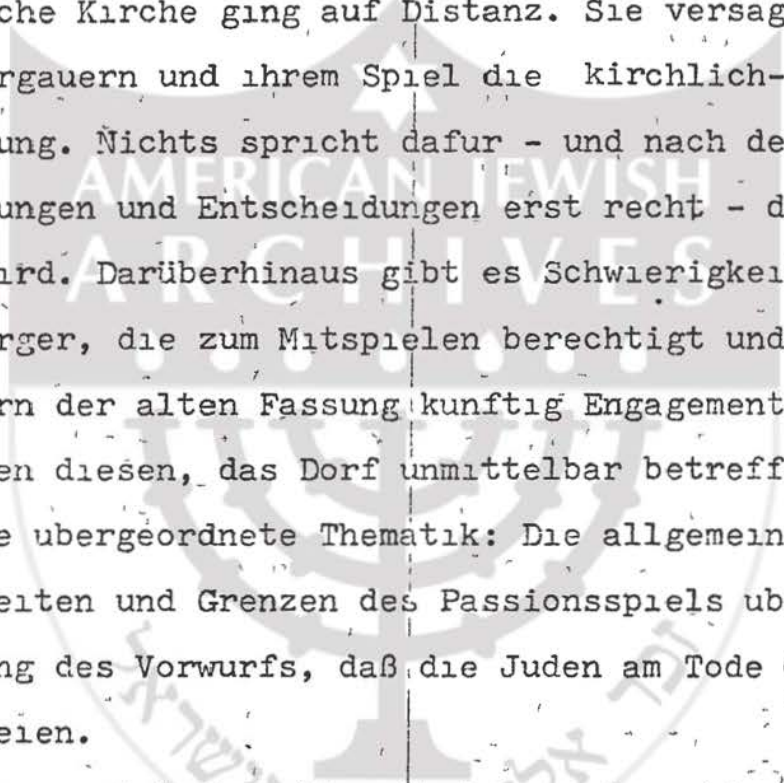
Man wollte es eigentlich bis zuletzt nicht glauben: daß die Gemeinde Oberammergau allen Erfahrungen, allen Ratschlägen und allem Wissen zum Trotz am alten Passionsspiel festhalten würde. Jetzt hat der Gemeinderat mit dem Beschluß, auf eine Reform des Passionsspiel auf der Basis der vorliegenden Arbeiten und Versuche zu verzichten, auch gegen sein Gewissen verstoßen. Mehrheit schützt vor Torheit nicht.

Harte Worte, verehrte Hörer, in der Tat. Aber die Oberammergauer werden noch mehr in dieser Richtung zu hören bekommen. Zu Recht, wie ich meine. Die Sachlage ist nämlich einzigartig: Die Kirchturmpolitik aus dem Holzschnitzerdorf, falls man das, was geschehen ist überhaupt noch als solche bezeichnen kann, erregt weltweites Aufsehen. Hatte sich das Drama von Oberammergau so oder ähnlich woanders abgespielt, konnte man es bestenfalls als Provinzposse zu den Akten legen. Aber Oberammergau ist anders. Es war durchaus eine Leistung seiner Bürger und der Gemeinde, daß sich das Spiel vom Leiden und dem Tod Jesu Christi zu einer weltbekannten Attraktion entwickelte. Doch damit stieg auch die Verantwortung, und der können sich jetzt die Oberammergauer nicht mehr entziehen. Sie betrifft nicht nur sie selber, sondern auch unser Land, das Verhältnis der christlichen und jüdischen Religionen zueinander und das Ansehen, das wir, die wir oft als die "hasslichen Deutschen" verschrien sind, in der Welt genießen.

Deshalb wären die Oberammergauer, von wem auch immer, schlecht beraten, sich nicht um die Meinung von außerhalb zu kümmern. Die Reformgegner führten neben dem Einwand, die vorliegenden Versuche seien schon zu sehr Kunstspiel und zu weit vom Empfinden der Bevölkerung entfernt, immer wieder wirtschaftliche Argumente ins Feld

Wurde man das Passionsspiel ändern meinten sie, kamen weniger Zuschauer ins Dorf. Aber schon jetzt vorauszusehen: Genau das wird eintreten, wenn die alte Fassung die nach den Worten des Bürgermeisters nur ^{genutzt} bearbeitet werden soll, gespielt wird. 1970 riefen jüdische Organisationen zu einem Boykott der Oberammergauer Passion auf. Viele Besucher, vor allem aus den USA, mieden daraufhin Aufführungen und den Holzschnitzerort. Auch die Katholische Kirche ging auf Distanz. Sie versagte 1970 den Oberammergauern und ihrem Spiel die kirchlich-offizielle Anerkennung. Nichts spricht dafür - und nach den jetzt erlebten Entwicklungen und Entscheidungen erst recht - daß sich daran etwas ändern wird. Darüberhinaus gibt es Schwierigkeiten im eigenen Haus. Viele Bürger, die zum Mitspielen berechtigt und fähig sind, verweigern der alten Fassung künftig Engagement und Mitarbeit. Doch neben diesen, das Dorf unmittelbar betreffenden Problemen, steht die übergeordnete Thematik: Die allgemeine Diskussion über Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des Passionsspiels überhaupt und die Behandlung des Vorwurfs, daß die Juden am Tode Christi allein Schuld seien.

Der Nazarenerstil der alten Fassung ist nicht mehr zeitgemäß. Mit der Reforminszenierung fand eine Entpersonifizierung statt. Geiz, Haß, das Böse schlechthin, werden als Allegorien dargestellt. Kein Zweifel, daß dies den Einwänden der Juden entgegenkommt und auch den Forderungen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils entspricht. Die Oberammergauer hingegen wollen ihre Zukunft mit den Fragwürdigkeiten aus der Vergangenheit gestalten, in der, soviel sei noch vermerkt, das Passionsspiel ~~üblicherweise~~ auch immer wieder verändert wurde. Rasche Klarheit sollte geschaffen werden, begründeten die Gemeinderäte ihren überraschenden Dringlichkeitsantrag - damit eine Beruhigung unter der Bevölkerung eintritt. In Oberammergau mag's nun ruhiger werden, in der Tat. Hören seine Bürger aber deshalb das Echo



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bet- und Gesangsbuch dienen wollen. Es ist beeindruckend zu sehen, in welcher vielfältigen Weise die verschiedenen Gaben diesem Anliegen dienstbar gemacht werden.

Aber wie schon gesagt „Liebe“ — Liebe zur Sache, aber wohl auch Liebe zur Kirche und ihren Gliedern in den

Gemeinden, die nun mit GOTTESWORT leben können sollen — „Liebe macht erfindend“!

* Werkbuch zum GOTTESWORT, Band I bis VIII Herausgegeben im Auftrag der Kommission für das Einheitsgesangbuch von Josef Seuffert unter Mitwirkung von Rupert Beiger, Güntra Duffner und Erhard Quack. Verlag Heider, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1975—1978

„Passio nova“ in Oberammergau zwischen religiösem Volksspiel und religiösem Festspiel

Ein Diskussionsbeitrag aus pastoraler Sicht (1)

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Josef Georg Ziegler, Mainz

Anzeige f. d. Kath. Sozialkritik 87 (1978) 17-22

Am 13. August 1977 waren die Einwohner Oberammergaus zu einer Probeaufführung der „Passio nova“ eingeladen. Dadurch sollte ihnen ein Vergleich mit dem bisherigen Passionsspiel ermöglicht und die Urteilsbildung erleichtert werden. Es folgten noch sechs Aufführungen. An der Aufführung am 17. 8. konnte ich teilnehmen. Ich befand mich auf der Rückfahrt von der Vertretung einer Pfarrei, die ich auf Anforderung seit nunmehr 25 Jahren irgendwo jeweils im Juli/August übernehme, um als Moraltheologe die Theorie an der Praxis zu überprüfen.¹ Kurz vorher sah ich bei den Salzburger Festspielen H. v. Hofmannthals „Jedermann“. Dadurch boten sich Vergleichsmöglichkeiten an.

Das Passionsspiel in Oberammergau erlangte durch seine Resonanz, die sich nicht auf Deutschland und sogar Europa beschränkte, den Rang eines weltweiten Ereignisses. Es überschritt in seiner Wirkung den örtlichen wie auch den kirchlichen Rahmen. Dieses Kompliment muß man machen. Die vor allem vor zehn Jahren vorgebrachten antisemitischen Querelen, die bis zur Aufforderung zum Boykott eskalierten, ändern nichts an dieser Tatsache. Sie unterstreichen sie vielmehr.

Auf das gemeinsame christliche Interesse verweist die offizielle Äußerung, die OKR H. Greifenstein, der Leiter des Referates für Kirche und Kunst im evangelisch-lutherischen Landeskirchenamt in München, veröffentlicht hat.² Danach sollte sich nicht nur die katholische Kirche, sondern auch die „Ihr im Hinblick auf die Passionsspiele innerlich verbundene“ evangelische Kirche nach seiner Ansicht „moralisch stark für den neuen Weg entscheiden“, umal er ein breites zustimmendes Echo

in Presse und in den Medien gefunden hat.“ Lobend wird die „Freiheit von jeglichem auch nur leisen Anflug von Antisemitismus“ hervorgehoben, abgeschwächt „eine Diskrepanz zwischen hoch künstlerischer Inszenierung und volkstümlicher Textfassung“ vermerkt.

Katholische kirchenamtliche Stellungnahmen tun sich als unmittelbarer Betroffene schwer. Die Entscheidung über das Passionsspiel liegt ausschließlich bei der kommunalen Gemeinde, die es in eigener Verantwortung durchführt. Sicherlich wurde 1949 vom Erzbischof von München die missio canonica erbeten und erteilt. Aber der derzeit zuständige Regionalbischof Franz Schwarzenböck, der sich die Probearbeitung ebenfalls am 17. 8. angesehen hat, wird wohl keine offizielle Stellungnahme abgeben.³ Dasselbe gilt vom Ortspfarrer Josef Forstmayr. Zwar haben Pfarrer und Pfarrgemeinderat Anfang Februar 1976 für das alte Spiel votiert. Das vorgeschlagene neue Spiel tendiere zu sehr in Richtung eines religiösen Festspiels wie „Jedermann“ oder Calderons „Das große Welttheater“. Der Pfarrer beilegte sich indes, sein Votum als die persönliche Meinung eines Bürgers von Oberammergau zu deklarieren. Wenn man allerdings liest, daß jeweils vor den Aufführungen der Pfarrer mit den Spielern das Vaterunser gebetet hat, scheint die Untertreibung der pfarrgemeindlichen und pfarrlichen Stimmgebung mehr der augenblicklichen Situation als dem faktischen Gewicht Rechnung zu tragen.

Jedes Passionsspiel ist zunächst ein religiöses Ereignis. Darum hat es notwendigerweise auch eine pastorale Seite. Vorwiegend unter diesem seelsorgeähnlichen Aspekt und weniger von künstlerischen oder ästhetischen Ge-

sichtspunkten, die natürlich nicht völlig palettiert werden können, werden folgende Überlegungen angestellt und bewußt in einer Zeitschrift für geistliche Mitarbeiter vorgelegt.

Nach einem kurzen Blick auf das Selbstverständnis der Passionsspiele (I) soll auf die Vorgeschichte der derzeitigen Diskussion anhand einer Rückschau auf den Werdegang der Oberammergauer Passionsspiele (II), der Kritik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg (III) und der jüngsten Reformbemühungen (IV) soweit eingegangen werden, als es für eine eigene Urteilsbildung hilfreich erscheint. Hierauf soll die Passio nova und ihre Probeaufführung skizziert (V) werden. Überlegungen hierzu (VI) bilden den Abschluß.

I Passionsspiele, ja oder nein?

Die Leibverfaßtheit drängt den Menschen als einen verkörperten Geist oder einen vergeistigten Körper dazu, seine inneren Haltungen jeweils in einem äußeren Verhalten auszudrücken, „hin-auszudrücken“. Infolgedessen manifestiert sich auch eine lebendige religiöse Einstellung in den verschiedenen Formen äußeren und gemeinschaftlichen Kultes. Davon gehören neben den verschiedenen Ausgestaltungen von Gebet und Opfer, künstlerischer und karitativer Tätigkeit auch die religiösen Spiele. Jedes religiöse Spiel ist demnach zunächst ein sinnvoller Akt der Gottesverehrung, der sich nicht auf eine rationale Verkopfung einschränken lassen will, sondern den gesamten Menschen mit all seinen Kräften erfassen und durchdringen möchte. Im Hinblick auf die Zuschauer ist es ein Bekenntnis der eigenen religiösen Überzeugung.⁴ Innerhalb des christlichen Offenbarungsglaubens erlangt es ähnlich einer *Biblia pauperum* den Rang einer Verkündigung der frohen Botschaft von der unfaßbaren Liebe Gottes. Diese sucht den Menschen wie ein Hirte sein verlorenes Schaf, während in außerchristlichen Religionen der Ausgangspunkt darin besteht, daß der Mensch Gott sucht.

Aufgrund der dadurch provozierten christlichen Kardinaltugend der Dankbarkeit⁵ schreibt Paulus in 2 Kor 4,13: „Ich glaube, darum rede ich (Ps. 115,1), so glauben wir, und darum reden auch wir.“ In besonderer Deutlichkeit motiviert diese aufgezeigte Grundhaltung gläubiger Dankbarkeit die Entstehung und die Aufführung eines Passionsspiels. Zugleich erschließt sie auch den Zugang zum Verständnis seiner inneren Dimension. „Der Terminus Passionsspiel meint nicht ein Spiel über die Passion Jesu, sondern ein Spiel über die durch die Passion Jesu vermittelte Erlösung.“ Deshalb fühlt den Passionsspielen im Gegensatz zu den im Kirchenjahr fest verankerten Oster- und

Wahrheitsspielen eine entsprechende Bindung an ein bestimmtes Aufführungsdatum.⁵

Die Schwierigkeit besteht darin, das historische Ereignis von Tod und Auferstehung des Herrn verständlich in die Gegenwart umzusetzen. Vorbedingung dazu ist, daß die jeweils sich anbietende Aufnahmefähigkeit und Ansprechbarkeit des Zuschauers als des Adressaten berücksichtigt wird. Kann man unbeschweren die Situation, in der die Passionsspiele entstanden sind, auf unsere Zeit übertragen? Ist ihr Einfluß, ihre Rolle in der Gesellschaft, die gleiche geblieben, wie sie zu Zeiten ihres Ursprunges war, wenn es heißt „So greift dieses religiöse Großraumtheater unheimlich intensiv in das Leben der Völker zur Zeit der Spätgotik und des Nominalismus ein. Es will eine haltgebende Energie ausstrahlen in einer Epoche der ratloser Vereinzelung und der werdenden Vereinsamung des Menschen in einem Zeitalter, in dem plötzlich alles ins Gleiten gerät. Es ruft in dieser Zeit zwischen Grauen und Lust durch Warnung vor dem Satanischen und durch das Vorbild des Dulders zur Rückkehr in die göttliche Ordnung.“⁶ Ähnlichkeiten mit unseren Verhältnissen, wie sie Umbruchzeiten eigen sind, sind nicht zu übersehen.

Daraus ergibt sich wohl auch der Umstand, daß von den derzeit zehn bekannten Passionsspielen sich die Hälfte in den unruhigen Jahren nach dem Ersten beziehungsweise Zweiten Weltkrieg zu einer Aufführung entschlossen haben. 1925 Öttingen, 1926 St. Margarethen im Bogenland, 1932 Kirchschlag in Niederösterreich und Sommersdorf in Oberfranken, 1950 Meitlach. Die älteste Spieltradition besitzt Erl in Tirol (1615), gefolgt von Waal (1626), Oberammergau (1633), Thiersee (1700) und Selzach in der Schweiz (1892).⁷ Bis auf St. Margarethen und Selzach wurde ein eigenes Passionsspielhaus errichtet.

Im Gefolge der nachkonziliaren theologischen Experimentierbereitschaft und innerkirchlichen Reformeuphorie meldeten sich auch gegenteilige Stimmen. Im Anschluß an das letzte Passionspiel in Oberammergau wurde der „Verzicht auf alle direkten und assertorischen Formen der Darstellung des Leidens Christi“ gefordert, weil „jede direkte Weise christlicher Verkündigung (als solche) verstand sich ja auch das Oberammergauer Passionspiel bis in unsere Tage) zur Zeit einfach scheitern muß.“ Es könne „die theologisch entscheidende Frage nicht mehr ausgewichen werden, ob das Leiden Christi heute überhaupt noch direkt darstellbar ist.“ Das Verlangen „nach indirekter Darstellung“ wurde folgendermaßen erläutert: „Gemeint ist ein Spiel, das sowohl Not und Leiden wie Frieden und Freude der jeweils lebenden Menschen exemplarisch so zum Ausdruck bringt, daß sie als Vorbild/Nachbild

der Passion Jesu transparent werden für das heilsstiftende Schicksal des gottgesandten Kyrios.“⁸

Eine ikonoklastische Einstellung hat sich aus sicher oftmals pulgemeinten Ansätzen im Laufe der Kirchengeschichte immer wieder gezeigt. Man denke an den Bilderstreit in der Ostkirche im 8. und 9. Jahrhundert. Dem schrecklichen Fanatismus der Reformierten und Calvinist im 16. Jahrhundert sind unzählige kirchliche Kunstwerke unwiederbringlich zum Opfer gefallen. „Die Bilderstürmer können nichts anderes als Spielstümer sein.“⁹ Das in der vorreformatorischen Zeit weit verbreitete Passionsspiel überlebte lediglich in den katholisch gebliebenen Gegenden.

Eine tödliche innerkirchliche Gefahr entstand für sie in der Aufklärungszeit seit der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts. Nur durch ein Privileg des Kurfürsten selber erreichten allein die hartnäckigen Deputationen der Oberammergauer, daß 1780 und 1790 die Passion weiterhin aufgeführt werden durfte. 1800 verfolgten die französischen und österreichischen Soldaten das Passionspiel mit ungewöhnlicher Anteilnahme. Unberührt davon meinte der geistliche Oberkirchenrat in München, unterstützt vom mächtigen Reformminister Montgelas 1810: „Das große Geheimnis unserer Religion gehört nun einmal nicht auf die Bühne.“ Die Oberammergauer sollten sich die Heilsgeschichte von der Kanzel herab anhören, anstatt sie zu persiflieren.¹⁰ Noch 1890 schrieb der damalige Pfarrer von Oberammergau, Pjalat Schröder, im „Amlichen Fuhrer durch das Passionspiel“, daß sich das Passionspiel nur um der Selbsterheit oder des Erbauungswertes für einen kultivierten Besucher lohne.¹¹ Hatte doch kurz vorher, 1808, die oberbayerische Regierung Änderungen gefordert — wie immer ohne Erfolg. „Denn nicht ein einzelner wachte über das Passionspiel, sondern die Gemeinde als Ganzes.“¹² Erst in jüngster Zeit wurden die alten Einwände aus der Aufklärungszeit wieder aufgegriffen.

Gegen die oben erwähnte grundsätzliche Infragestellung der unmittelbaren Darstellung der Passion im bayerischen Klerusblatt haben sich damals sofort Stellung bezogen.¹³ Zunächst ist darauf zu verweisen, daß eine szenische Wiedergabe der Leidensgeschichte, vor allem der Abendmahl-, Kreuzigungs- und Auferstehungsszenen, immer ein je verdienstvollerer Versuch bleiben wird. Das gilt indes von jeder Beschäftigung mit den Heilsgeschichten, gleichgültig ob sie exegetischer, meditativer oder künstlerischer Art ist. Wieder die Anforderung an zu hoch geschraubt, findet sich kein Grund, alles und jedes abzulehnen. Freie allseits befriedigende Aufführung der Passion gibt es nicht, ob sie nun „direkt“ oder „indirekt“ vorgestellt wird. Auch hier gilt das Besondere ist der Feind des Guten.

Grundsätzlich ist zu überlegen: „Heißt es nicht aber die Inkarnation Jesu Christi selbst zu verflüchtigen, wenn man sein Erdleben derart weit weg rücken würde, daß es nicht mehr direkt dargestellt werden dürfte?“¹⁴ Der Vorschlag einer indirekten Darstellung wurde 1971 angeregt von der damaligen Diskussion über das Verständnis des Religionsunterrichtes als einer religionskundlichen Information, als indirekter Verkündigung. Inzwischen hat sich die Lage stabilisiert. Jetzt heißt es wieder: „Der Religionsunterricht muß ein ausreichendes Grundwissen in Sachen des Christentums vermitteln, das begründete Stellungnahmen ermöglicht. Ein in dieser Weise offener, aber nicht nebulöser Unterricht sollte sich auch nicht scheuen, Zugang zur religiösen Praxis zu eröffnen (ohne zu ihr mit der Autorität der Schule zu zwingen).“¹⁵

Andererseits geht es „nicht um die Wiedergabe eines klassischen oder modernen Bühnenstückes, sondern um die fromme Darstellung der vorgegebenen Passionsberichte. Deshalb sind innerhalb des allgemeingültigen dramaturgischen Rahmens eigene Stagesetze gültig und zu beachten.“¹⁶ „So hat das Passionspiel durch seine Ehrfurcht vor dem Wortlaut und dem Geist des Evangeliums den Vorzug, von literarischen Regeln oder ‚Kunststrickungen‘ und von kunstvollen Redewendungen unbelastet zu sein, es ist von jener Kunst, die der Kunst spottet — von einer Kunst, die zu jener Ordnung des Herzens und des Glaubens, zu ihrer dritten Ordnung gehört, vor der Pascal sagte, sie sei die der einfaltigen Seelen, die einer edlen Form der Menschenliebe, sie sei die einer dem Volk gemäßen Erhabenheit.“¹⁷ Das Passionspiel ist ein „Theater“ sui generis, es zwar hinsichtlich des Inhalts, der Darstellung und des Publikums.¹⁸

Entscheidend ist, mit welcher Anrufcharakter des Heilshandels des Herrn auf der Bühne zum Ausdruck gelangt. Der „evokative Grundzug der religiösen Sprache“¹⁹ muß zum Tragen kommen. Darum „steht und fällt die Ausstrahlungs- und Überzeugungskraft des Passionsspiels mit der religiösen Überzeugung der Laienspieler.“²⁰ Die Botschaft der Passion des Herrn wird jede Zeit erschüttern und aufrütteln. Ihre zeitlose Aktualität verlangt allerdings eine zeitentsprechende Aktualisierung. Die ontologische, sensusmäßig vorgegebene Geschichtlichkeit des Menschen hat zur Folge, daß das, was in der Menschheit gleich bleiben soll, nicht gleich bleiben darf. Anders gewendet: Wenn alles beim Alten bleibt, bleibt es schon wegen der Veränderung der Umwelt eben nicht beim Alten. Im Ökumenismusdekret des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils Art. 6,1 bekennen sich die Väter zu *ecclesia semper reformanda*, wenn sie ausführen: „Die Kirche wird

auf dem Weg ihrer Pilgerschaft von Christus zu dieser dauernden Reform gerufen, deren sie alle Zeit bedarf, soweit sie menschliche und irdische Einrichtung ist.“ „Die Frage, die das Passionspiel beantwortet, ist die Frage nach dem Sinn des Lebens und des Sterbens. Der Inhalt dieser Frage bleibt, die Form des Fragens ändert sich. Der Inhalt der Antwort, das Evangelium von Tod und Auferstehung des Herrn, bleibt. Aber die Form der Antwort muß auf die je andere Form des Fragens eingehen. Sonst ist die Antwort unverantwortlich.“ Der Text, die Regie, die ganze Konzeption des Passionsspiels kann deshalb niemals endgültig, ohne Ende geltend, ein für allemal festgelegt werden. Dieses Fazit, das für jede Form der Verkündigung des Evangeliums auf der Kanzel, im Schulzimmer oder auf der Bühne gilt, macht auch vor Oberammergau nicht halt.“²¹

Es geht letztlich auch beim Passionspiel um die Frage einer zeitgemäßen Verkündigung.²² Darum geht die Diskussion um Oberammergau einen jeden Verkündiger an. Zur Weitergabe der frohen Botschaft ist nicht nur der Priester, sondern jeder Getaufte und Gefirmte befähigt und beauftragt. Das verpflichtende und unter Umständen vernichtende Kriterium für den Verkündiger enthält Rom 10,14f: „Nun denn, wie sollte man ihn anrufen, bevor man an ihn glaubt? Und wie sollte man zum Glauben kommen, ohne von ihm gehört zu haben? Und wie sollte man hören, wenn niemand verkundet, oder wie verkünden, wenn niemand gesandt ist? Darum heißt es auch: „Wie willkommen sind die Füße derer, welche die gute Botschaft bringen!““ Diese Aussage gilt in einem weiteren Sinne für alle, die an der Aufführung des Passionsspiels in irgendeiner Form beteiligt sind. Das Passionspiel, die Aufführung selbst, wird nicht in Frage gestellt. Vielmehr wird die Form der Aufführung in Frage gestellt.

(Fortsetzung folgt)

- Adressen der Passionspielorte:
 Passion Erl — A-6343 Erl
 Telefon 0 53 73 / 2 61 09
 Passionsspiele Kirchschlag —
 A-2860 Kirchschlag N O
 Telefon 0 26 46 / 243
 Passionsspiele St. Margarethen
 A-7062 St. Margarethen 1 B
 Telefon 0 26 80 / 234
 Spielgemeinschaft Mettmach —
 A-4931 Mettmach, Telefon 0 77 55 / 229
 Gemeinde Oberammergau Passionsspiele —
 D-8103 Oberammergau
 Telefon 0 83 22 / 500
 Volksschauspiel Öttingheim —
 D-7556 Öttingheim
 Telefon 0 72 22 / 3 41 61
 Selzcher Passionsspiele —
 CH-2545 Selzach, Telefon 0 65 / 6 85 55
 Frankische Passionsspiele Semmersdorf —
 D-8722 Semmersdorf, Telefon 0 97 26 / 520
 Passionsspiele Thiersee —
 A-6335 Thiersee, Telefon 0 53 76 / 220
 Passionspielgemeinschaft Waal e V —
 D-6949 Waal, Telefon 0 82 46 / 333

1 Vgl. R. Krask Die skulpturale Bedeutung der Monumentalität in Theologisch-praktische Quartalschrift 13 (1977) 83-90. Die sehr lehrreiche Bilanz zur Entwicklung des polnischen Mittelalters, die von Prof. J. Ptaszka, der von Warschau nach Augsburg berufen worden ist, zur Disposition, überreicht.
 2 Vgl. J. Müller, Evangelisches Lob für Passion, Spiel und Form, in: buddhistische Zeitung vom 21. 8. 1977 S. 15.

3 Ausführlich besprochen Schwarzenböck folgende Äußerung als seine persönliche Meinung: „Ich glaube, der Weg zurück zu Dürer wäre nicht möglich. Unsere Zeit verlangt das Wagnis neuer Wege und neuer Versuche, auch wenn man dabei auf Älteres zurückgreift.“ In: Münchener kath. Kirchenzeitung vom 25. 9. 1977, S. 10.

4 Im Buddhismus der keine kirchliche Organisation kennt, werden die religiösen Mythen durch wandernde Theatergruppen die eine Woche und länger in einem Dorf den ganzen Tag über spielen überliefert, wie ein ehemaliger China-Missionar berichtet.

5 H. Schiller Der Brief an die Pflanz-Fin Kompositionen (Düsseldorf 1963) 284. „Da Pflanz ist die Wurzel und die Organe der Wurzel sind die Christen“ Entgegen den vier Pfosten der Katholizität (Gerechtigkeit, Klugheit, Tapferkeit, Zucht und Maß) trägt sich aus einem biblischen Menschenbild als die christliche Kardinaltugend Liebe als Grundtugend, die sich äußert im Gehorsam gegenüber Gott in der Dankbarkeit gegenüber dem Nächsten und der Demut (Wirklichkeitsnähe) gegenüber sich selbst.

6 R. Bergmann, Studien zur Entstehung und Geschichte der deutschen Passionsspiele des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts München 1972, 23. Im 13. Jahrhundert hatte allerdings allein Oberammergau als Gelübdespiel den Pfingstmontag statt des Ostertermins gewählt.

7 A. Kindermann Theatergeschichte Europas I Salzburg 1967, 231 zitiert in St. Schiller, Passionsspiele als Zeugen der sich wandelnden Frömmigkeit Schaller u. a., Passionsspiele heutzutage Notwendigkeit und Möglichkeiten Freiburg 1973 18 (zitiert Schaller 1).

8 Schaller 1, 200 9-13.

9 L. Zinke Zwischen Tragikomödie und Klischee Fragen und Anregungen nach der „Oberammergauer Passion 1970“ in: Klerusblatt St. (1971) 41-43, ders., Oberammergau 1970 und zeitgenössische Verkündigung, Abschließende Thesen zur Diskussion um die Erneuerung des Passionsspiels, 200 150 f.

10 Schaller 1, 200 18 f.

11 M. Blondel Die religiöse Existenz im Geheimnis der Passion M. Blondel — H. Bremond, Oberammergau und das Geheimnis der Passion, München 1949, 17, 42 f. Am 22. Mai 1970 wurde die für Pfingstmontag den 4. Juni, bereits vorbereitete und angekündigte Aufführung endgültig abgelehnt. Der seit 1970 zum Schutzkommissar ernannte Schöpfer der byzantinischen Volksschauspielen, der Tegerfasser Benediktiner H. Braun, war der Vertreter des Votums des kirchlich-ökumenischen Geistlichen Rates, auf den hin am 31. 3. 1970 ein Generalverbot für alle Passionsaufführungen erlassen wurde. 1910 wurde das Spielgesuch zum zweitenmal abgelehnt, 1915 aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen noch nicht. St. Schiller, Die Passionsspiele von Oberammergau 1624-1950 Etal 1970 36 f., 39, 43 (zitiert Schaller 2).

12 M. Krause-Lang Einführung, Blondel — Bremond 200 18.

13 A. O. 10.

14 J. G. Ziegler, „Schau nicht um der Fuchs geht um.“ Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um das Passionspiel in Oberammergau und anderes mehr, in: Klerusblatt St. (1971) 119, ders., Die „große“ Passion in Oberammergau Offener Brief zur Diskussion über das Passionspiel an den Bürgermeister von Oberammergau, in: Klerusblatt St. (1971) 123 f.

15 Ziegler, 200 119.

16 H. G. Koch, Religionsunterricht — Last oder Chance?, in: Herder Korrespondenz 31 (1977) 436. Die Bischofssynode in Rom wird sich im Oktober mit dem Thema befassen. Katechese in unserer Zeit unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Kinder- und Jugendkatechese.

17 Ziegler 200 115 f.

18 M. Blondel, 200 48 f.

19 Ziegler, 200 121.

20 G. Fasche Religiöse Erfahrung und religiöse Sprache, in: Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie 99 (1977) 194.

21 Ziegler 200 183. Vgl. H. Bremond Die Spiele von Oberammergau Blondel — Bremond, 200 87-123.

22 Ziegler 200 183. J. J. Ratzinger, LThK Ergänzungsband II, 505 spricht unter Übernahme einer Formulierung französischer Exegeten von relecture, „in der das Damalige auf heutige Weise gelesen und damit zugleich auf das Wesentliche wie auf sein Ungewöhnliches hin neu interpretiert wird“.

23 Im Einzelfall mag es berechtigt sein, Kritik kirchlicher Kreise zurückzuweisen. Doch waren die Folgen verhängnisvoll, sich dadurch zur Ablehnung kirchlicher Mitarbeit und Bistabsprache provozieren zu lassen oder sogar die religiöse Dimension und damit verknüpften Verkündigungscharakter herunterspielen zu wollen. Eine drittartige Reaktion oder auch nur Tendenz würde unweigerlich zum Verfall und zum Ende des Passionsspiels führen. Auf diese Konsequenz, die übrigens für alle Passionsspiele gilt, kann nicht deutlich und entschieden genug verwiesen werden.

PRIESTER



Pater Dr. Viktor Redemptorist (1898)

„Wir sind an einer tiefgreifenden der Weltgeschichte, nenne nur Stichworte Atomzeitalter ein Die emanzipieren sich Die Religionen breiten sich in den besten schämen sich ihrer Gesellschaft wird differenziert pluralistischer Daraus einer solch globalen Un der Seelsorge nicht und Wir können nicht Seelsor vor 30 Jahren.“

Ein Zitat aus dem Jahrbuch mehr denn je die Situation. Es überrascht Dogmatikprofessor die hat Pater Dr. Viktor Schurr am Inn, Lehrer an der Hochschule Daß er sich die Richtung heraus auf die Praktisch-Realisierbaren spricht für ihn Für ihn, wie etwas, das die Ver seelsorgliche Praxis bedingt und dies wurde sein. Viktor Schurr, 1898 in Württemberg geboren, Ersten Weltkrieg in Gallipoli, Redemptorist ein 1925

„Passio nova“ in Oberammergau zwischen religiösem Volksspiel und religiösem Festspiel

Ein Diskussionsbeitrag aus pastoraler Sicht (2)

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Josef Georg Ziegler, Mainz

II

Die Frage der Form — Auskunft der Geschichte

„Seit Anfang des 14. Jahrhunderts finden sich geistliche Spiele in Volkssprachen bei allen christlichen abendländischen Nationen.“²² Im Anschluß an Oster- und Weihnachtsspiele entstanden auch Passionsspiele. „Die dramatische Passionsfeier war die gültige religiöse Form des abendländischen Gemeinschaftstheaters, deren nächste Verwandte im antiken Mysterienspiel zu suchen sind.“²³ In ihnen schuf sich das religiöse Leben und die christliche Lehre den jeweils zeitgemäßen Ausdruck.

Gegen die im Laufe der Zeit extensiven Auswucherungen und Auswüchse in den auf mehrere Tage ausgedehnten geistlichen Spielen wandten sich die Reformatoren durch ein generelles Verbot. Einen gewissen Ersatz brachten die Oratorien zu den Festen des Kirchenjahres. Erinnert sei an die Oratorien Johann Sebastian Bachs und ihre Bedeutung im Leben der evangelischen Gemeinden unserer Tage. Die katholische Reform setzte ein erst in jüngster Zeit wieder entdecktes und zu Ehren gekommenes reiches Angebot von Ordensdramen ein. Es gelangte in den von Jesuiten geleiteten Schulen zu einer stauenswerten Blüte.

1633 wutete mitten in den Not des Dreißigjährigen Krieges in Mitteleuropa die Pest. In ihrer verzweifelten Lage suchten die Menschen Hilfe bei Gott. Die Stadt Amberg gelobte z. B. den Bau einer Marienkirche auf dem seither so genannten Marienhilfberg. Die Gemeinde Oberammergau gelobte die Aufführung der *Passion* in zehnjährigem Turnus. „Den Text stellte man sich selbstständig zusammen, fast zur Hälfte aus dem Augsburger Passionspiel (um 1470) und dem gedruckten Stück des [evangelischen] Augsburger [Schneiders] Schilkeisters und Meistersingers Sebastian Wild (1566) mit geschickten Umstellungen und Zusammenfassungen.“²⁴ Daneben wurden andere Quellen, z. B. aus Tirol oder Weilheim, verarbeitet. Als ältester schriftlicher Nachweis blieb der Text zur Aufführung

von 1664 in einer Handschrift von 1662 erhalten. Seit 1680 wurde die Aufführung jeweils im Zehnerjahr wiederholt.

1730 hat der Augustinerchorherr Anselm Manhart aus dem nahegelegenen Stift Rottenbuch sogenannte lebende Bilder, z. B. des Herzens Jesu oder des Heilands in der Wüste, aus der Volksfrömmigkeit und den Andachtsbildern angefügt. Unter dem Einfluß der zeitgemäßen Schuldramen schuf 1750 Pater Ferdinand Rosner (1709—1778) aus der benachbarten Benediktinerabtei Ettal in seiner „Passio nova“ einen gereimten Text von über 9000 Versen mit viel Chören und lebenden Bildern aus dem Alten Testament. Schon der Titel verrät den barocken Stil: „Bitteres Leyden, Obsiegender Todt, und Glorreiche Auferstehung des eingefleischten Sohn Gottes einer christlichen Versammlung vorgestellt.“ Das Spiel schlug ein, wie die Besucherzahlen beweisen. Es wurde allenthalben kopiert. „Nirgends wird die Verbindung des Ordensdramas mit dem Volksschauspiel sinnvoller als hier. Fast gleichzeitig mit Klopstocks religiösem Epos „Messias“ entstanden, steht Rosners „Passion“ diesem würdig und ebenbürtig an der Seite (Gunther Müller).“²⁵

Bereits 1780 wurde die ausladende Fassung Rosners von Magnus Knipfelberger gekürzt. 1863 waren im Zuge der Aufklärung die ersten, wenn zunächst auch lax gehandhabten Verbote der Passionsspiele erlassen worden. Der zweite Kahlschlag nach der Reformation setzte ein. 1770, 1781, 1787 und 1788 wiederholte die Bayerische Regierung das Verbot. Allein die unbeugsamen Oberammergauer setzten 1780 ein Aufführungsprivileg durch. Sie gaben dem Passionspiel lediglich einen anderen Titel: „Das Alte und Neue Testament.“ Pater Othmar Weiss von Ettal kam den Angriffen zuvor, indem er 1811 den Text vereinfachte und in hochdeutsche Prosa umschrieb. Der Oberammergauer Schulmeister Rochus Dedler schuf dazu eine eingängige, volkstümliche Musik.²⁶

Die letzte Revision aus dem Jahre 1860, die sich um eine möglichst biblische Ausdrucksweise bemühte, stammt vom Oberammergauer Pfarrer Alois

Darsenberger († 1869). Er übernahm die mühevollen Redigierung, weil sie höheren Ortes angeordnet worden war. Die Darsenberger-Dedler-Fassung wurde im wesentlichen unverändert bis um 1900 geübt. Änderungen seitdem über 100 Jahre lang, beibehalten. 1930 wurde sie zum letzten Mal überarbeitet. Die für 1970 vorgelegten teilweisen Änderungen von P. Stefan Schaller, Ettal, werden mit einer Stimme Mehrheit im Gemeinderat abgelehnt.

Ein Blick in die Geschichte zeigt, was sich bei den Aufführungen der *Passio* in Oberammergau in ihrer ersten Periode, in der Zeit von 1634 bis 1760, an dem Wandel in der Erwartungshaltung des Volkes, seines Geschmackes und seines Empfindens reagierte. Sie reflektierten den jeweiligen Zeitgeist ihrer Heimat und blieben so im guten Sinne „modern.“ Das ständige Bemühen um Modernität erklärt neben der Freude des Volkes am Improvisieren die fortlaufenden Änderungen. Es handelt sich um Aufführungen vom Volk für das Volk, solange diese sich ungestört von außen im eng begrenzten Bereich des Dorfes und seiner näheren Umgebung abspielten.

In der zweiten Periode von 1760 bis 1860 wurden Modifizierungen von „unten“ und von „oben“ von den staatlichen und kirchlichen Behörden als die Anwälte einer rationalistischen Einstellung der führenden geistigen Schichten veranlaßt. Ab 1810 zeitigte zusätzlich die Bewegung der Romantik in Wort und Ton ihren Einfluß. Erst in der dritten Periode ab 1860 kam die Bereitschaft zum Ändern, wenn auch niemals völlig, zur Ruhe. In dieser Zeit verlangten die Spiele eine überlokale Bedeutung. Sie wurden mit zunehmender Resonanz in der Öffentlichkeit immer aufwendiger und damit unbeweglich inszeniert. Sie gerieten unter den Zwang des Erfolges, der nicht gefährdet werden sollte.

Seit 1840 steigt der Zustrom fremder Besucher stetig. Er überschritt 1970 mit 540 000 Gästen die halbe Million, ungeachtet der 70 000 Buchungsabsagen vor allem aus jüdischen Kreisen in der USA. Die Mehrzahl der Besucher stammte zuletzt aus dem englischen Sprachraum. Die Folge war, daß nur mehr die persönliche Anteilnahme im Auseinandersetzen mit dem Spiel in immer weitere Kreise außerhalb des Passionspielortes erfaßte.

Die Beschäftigung mit dem „Pländchen Oberammergau“ führte zu der Einsicht, daß die ungeheure Wirkung des Passionsspiels primär von religiösem Inhalt und erst sekundär von der künstlerischen Leistung herrührt. Martin Deutinger, ein Neffe des Philosophen gleichen Namens, war der erste, der 1850 diese Erkenntnis niederschrieb.²⁷ Diese Einsicht setzte sich durch. Sie konnte in den vergangenen Jahren auch nicht durch die Ver-

Verdächtigung des Passionsspiels als eines nur schlecht kaschiereten Geschäftes mit der Religion in allzu bekannten Nachrichtenmagazinen erschüttert werden.

Natürlich konnte mit zunehmender Breitenwirkung Kritik am Text wie an der Musik und an der Inszenierung der Daisenberger-Dedler-Fassung nicht ausbleiben. Der angesehenste Dramaturg seiner Zeit, Eduard Devrient, sprach von einer Krone des geistlichen Volksschauspiels. Cyll Kistler versuchte eine moderne Komposition Leo Weismantel sei stellvertretend für mehrere Verfasser genannt, die sich an die Schaffung eines neuen Textes wagten. „Musiker und Dichter versuchen Reformideen durchzusetzen, die freilich an der geschlossenen Abwehr Oberammergaus scheitern.“²⁷ Diese präzise Feststellung konnte noch 1950 mit vollem Recht getroffen werden.

III

Wachsende Kritik

Seit 1910 meldeten sich immer lauter negative kritische Stimmen an der Daisenberger-Dedler-Fassung und ihrer Ausstattung zu Wort. Es wurden vornehmlich drei Argumente angeführt. Der Hauptvorwurf lautet, daß die Textfassung dem im vorigen Jahrhundert üblichen Nazarener-Stil verpflichtet sei. Seine weiche Süßlichkeit widerspreche ganz und gar dem derzeitigen Zeitempfinden. Sie verstoße überdies gegen den herben, Entscheidung fordernden Geist der biblischen Passionsberichte. Über den Geschmack läßt sich bekanntlich nicht streiten. Zugegeben, auch der Nazarener-Stil blieb nicht von einer degenerierten Spätphase verschont, die zum kraftlosen Klischee erstarrte. Das bezeugen nicht wenige satism bekannte Heiligenbilder und desgleichen Statuen.

Doch muß man genau hinsehen. Die von Direktor Klaus Gallwitz im Stadt in Frankfurt veranstaltete Nazarener-Ausstellung erfreute sich bis zu ihrem Ende am 28. 8. 1977 eines regen Zuspruches und überraschender Zustimmung. Auch die lange verfeimten neugotischen Kirchenräume erfahren neuerdings samt ihren Altären in der sogenannten Schreiner-Gotik eine unvermutete Wertschätzung. Die wachsende Besucherzahl des Passionsspiels läßt auf eine nicht erlahmende Faszination der angefeindeten Aufführung schließen. Sie kann als Gegenindiz gegen die Unterstellung einer überlebten Aufführung ins Feld geführt werden. Dieser Hinweis bezieht sich nicht bloß auf die meist evangelischen Besucher aus dem angelsächsischen Sprachraum, die einem gewissen neugotischen pietistischen Stilempfinden nahestehen.²⁸ Auch das Gros der übrigen Zuschauer

wurde sichtlich von dem dargestellten Geschehen berührt. Davon vermochte sich jedermann zu überzeugen, dem die atemlose Aufmerksamkeit und Figuralität nicht entgehen konnte, mit der die 5700 Menschen im stets ausverkauften Passionsspielhaus der Darstellung folgten.

Hier setzt die zweite Kritik ein. „Ein zentraler Vorwurf an die Passionsspiele ist der, daß sie das Mitleid anregen und dadurch die Entscheidung des einzelnen zur Nachfolge verhindern.“²⁹ Die globale Anschuldigung, die angestrebte Katharsis, die reinigende Wirkung, eines dramatischen Bühnenstückes wurde durch eine Gewichtverlagerung auf eine schnell vorübergehende Gemütsbewegung verfälscht, kann allerdings mehr oder weniger beichtigt gegen jede szenische Darstellung erhoben werden. Die Gefahr, daß das Interesse an der Form das Interesse am Inhalt verdeckt, ist bei keiner Theateraufführung gänzlich auszuschalten. Dies gilt in dezidiertem Ausmaß gerade für ein Volksschauspiel, das dem Schaubedürfnis und der Schaulust der „breiten Masse“ gehörend Rechnung zu tragen hat. Noch ausschließlicher trifft dies für die Aufführung eines religiösen Stückes und erst recht des Dramas von Golgatha als dem zentralen religiösen Datum des christlichen Glaubens zu.

Es war gerade die anschauliche Einkörperung von Kreuz und Auferstehung des Herrn, die den Religionsphilosophen Maurice Blondel († 1949) zu Beginn des Jahrhunderts für Oberammergau Partei ergreifen ließ. Die religiöse Entscheidung liegt nach dem Verfasser der „L'Action“³⁰ nicht auf der Ebene der reinen Logik, sondern der der menschlichen Freiheit. Jeder Glaubensakt entspringt deshalb jeweils aus einer lebendigen Tat (Aktion) und führt zu einem konkreten Tun. Die Reaktion auf das Passionsspiel von Oberammergau schildert er folgendermaßen: „Das hauptsächlichste Element des dramatischen Interesses ist gar nicht diese einfache Intuition [der Spieler], die uns nur im Zuschauerraum an dem Wirken der göttlichen Vorsehung teilnehmen läßt, das ist vielmehr unsere mögliche und gleichsam mit den Darstellern des Dramas vereinbarte Mitwirkung, in der wir zumindest im Keime die Leidenschaften und die Entscheidungen unseres geheimsten Seelengrundes wiedererkennen. Wir beschränken uns nicht darauf, zuzuschauen, wie sich die Dinge entwickeln — wir bilden uns ein, daß wir selbst sie bewirken.“³¹

In dem Maße, in dem eine Identifizierung mit dem auf der Bühne vorgeführten Geschehen und dessen Darstellern gelingt, in dem Maße resultiert daraus eine innere Umkehr. Diese hinwiederum darf nicht in einer bloß momentanen Ergriffenheit steckenbleiben, sondern muß sich im tätigen Leben auswir-

ken. Doch entzieht sich eine derartige Feststellung einem statistisch nachweisbaren Zugriff. Es gibt nun einmal keine zuverlässige Methode, die es schlussig ermöglichen würde, den Grad der Ergriffenheit unter dem Eindruck einer bestimmten Aufführung zu registrieren. Alle derartigen Urteile sind subjektiv gefärbt. Sie gestatten deshalb nur einen bedingten Vergleich. Trotzdem vermögen der dramatische Aufbau, die Motivierung des Handlungsablaufes, der Duktus von Sprache und Musik, die Art der Inszenierung bis in die Wahl der Farben der Kostüme den Zuschauer in eine bestimmte Richtung zu führen. Die Verdächtigung, daß die „nazarenistische“ Daisenberger-Dedler-Fassung einer oberflächlichen Sentimentalisierung allzu bereitwillig Vorschub leiste, ist jedenfalls nicht zu überhören. Eine objektive Stellungnahme ist, wie gesagt, sehr erschwert, wenn nicht ausgeschlossen. Viel zu viele subjektive, zum Teil unbewußte Imponderabilien, Unabwagbarkeiten, verstellen eine klare, vorurteilsfreie Sicht auf das komplexe Erscheinungsbild eines Passionsspiels.

Den äußeren Anlaß zur entschlossenen Inangriffnahme einer Reform stellte der Vorwurf einer antiseimischen Tendenz bereit. Im Zuge des damaligen Zeitgeistes hat Pater Weiss volens volens den Teufel als Gegenspieler Jesu Christi aus dem Spiel herausgenommen. Pfarrer Schröder schrieb über Daisenbergers Text: „Die gelehrte Kritik bemängelt zumeist den ungenügenden Aufbau des Dramas. Der ganze Aufbau des Passionsspiels stützt sich auf die Vertreibung der Käufer und Verkäufer. Man sieht zu wenig die bewegenden Kräfte der Umwälzung in Erscheinung treten, welche die Welt verändern sollte.“³² Selbst wenn das Spiel von der Versöhnung der Welt mit Gott in Christus nur den Verdacht nahelegen sollte, es wurde einen Aufruf zum Haß und nicht zum Frieden provozieren, muß der Verdächtigung nachgegangen werden, gleichgültig, ob sie zunächst begründet erscheint oder nicht. Es ist bekannt, daß die synoptischen Passionsberichte verschiedene Akzentuierungen aufweisen. Während Matthäus die endgültige Trennung des Christentums vom Judentum darstellen wollte, bewegte Markus das Paradox der Herrlichkeit Gottes in der Gestalt des Gekreuzigten. Lukas ging es darum, für seine Leser aus dem Heidentum Angriffe aus dem Judentum abzuwehren. Johannes schildert die glorreiche Vollendung des Heilswerkes.³³

Selbstverständlich muß jede szenische Bearbeitung des Passionsspiels eine Auswahl aus den Motiven treffen. Sie kann ebenso wenig an der Gegnerschaft der Zeitgenossen Jesu vorübergehen. Anstatt die Habsucht der Pharisäer als „in sich fragwürdiges Hauptmotiv herauszustellen, kann z. B. deren traditionalistische Einstellung zum Aus-

Druck & Macht werden und die davon westliche Sorge, den fehlgeleiteten Glauben zu beibringen. Fast notwendig entstand aus dieser Gerabhaltung ein Mißverständnis der Worte Jesu, wenn Er sagte, daß er den Tempel in drei Tagen wieder aufgebaut werde. Die Daisenberger Auffassung dem damaligen antonistischen Antisemitismus als Bewackeltes entgegenkam (das war das Zentrum auftrat, weil die Katholiken ebenfalls unter der Minderheitssituation zu leiden hatten), so dürfte unsere heutige Zeit für eine überzogene konservative „innerkirchliche“ Haltung leichten Zugang finden. Auch eine politisch interpretierte Messiasvorstellung bietet einen Ansatzpunkt für das Eingreifen der Pharisäer.

„Wenn genügend deutlich wird, daß Jesus in seinem Volke Parteigänger hatte, laßt es sich durchaus vertreten, daß seine Feinde, die auch seine Volksgenossen waren, auf die Bühne gebracht werden“, meint ein so unverdächtig Zeuge wie P. Willehad Paul Eckert²⁴. Irreführend ist wie überall eine extreme, einseitige Schwarzweißmalerei.

Letztlich geht es um den geheimnisvollen „Ratschluß Gottvaters“, gerade durch den Weg des Gehorsams seines Sohnes bis zum Tod am Kreuz den Ungehorsam der Menschheit zu sühnen und ihn dadurch zu verherrlichen, als den lebenden wie gerechten Herrn der Schöpfung und Erlösung anzuerkennen. Dies zu verdeutlichen, darum geht es. Diese Direktive ist leicht hingesagt, aber schwer in die verschiedenen Formen der Verkündigung umzusetzen, natürlich erst recht in einem notwendigerweise buhnenwirksamen Passionspiel.

Man sollte das Problem der Judenfeindschaft nicht über Gebühr hochspielen, damit es nicht wie ein Bumerang zurückfällt. Das Passionspiel kann nicht zu einem „Wiedergutmachungsstück“ umfrisiert werden. Das wirkt erst recht unglaubwürdig. Außerdem rekrutierte und rekrutiert sich der Judenhaß wohl zum wenigsten aus religiösen Beweggründen. Diese wurden oftmals vorgeschoben. Die Antizionismus-Resolution der UNO ist viel beunruhigender. Das wußte auch Dr. Prinz, der Leiter der Internationalen Kommission des American Jewish Congress, bei seinen Interventionen. Ob es klug war, maßgebliche Parteigänger der Passio nova sofort im Anschluß an die Probeaufführung nach New York zu einem Gespräch mit dem jüdischen Komitee einzuladen, sei dahingestellt. Jede ökumenische Initiative — und zur Ökumene gehört auch das auserwählte Volk des Alten Bundes — bedarf eines behutsamen Vorgehens.

Bei allen Überlegungen kann es nur darum gehen, eine noch glaubwürdige

re Wiedergabe des Passionsgeschichts zu erreichen, als es die (unrecht oder zu Unrecht so dargelegt) angeklagte derzeitige Daisenberger Illustrierung ermöglicht.

IV

Reformbemühungen

Die ab 1950 in der Öffentlichkeit erhobenen Einwendungen veranlaßten Bürgermeister Raimund Lang nach 1960 ein Gremium von Experten aus Geschichte, Literatur und Theologie zu berufen. Bereits 1962 wurde unter anderem von Carl Orff vorgeschlagen, auf den Text Rosners zurückzugreifen. Ein Literat, der eine Passio moderna schreiben konnte, war nicht in Sicht. Nach 1968 wurde im Foyer des Bayerischen Rundfunks ein Radiouzklus mit Modellen einer Inszenierung ausgestellt, nachdem 1967 ein Probeispiel der Rosnerfassung wegen der Kosten abgelehnt worden war.

Nach 1970 nahmen die Reformvorschläge greifbare Konturen an. 1975 designierte der Gemeinderat als die zuständige Instanz Hans Schwaighofer (56), den Direktor der Staatlichen Fachschule für Bildschnitzerei in Oberammergau, zum Spielleiter. Er sollte eine Probeinszenierung der Passio nova vorbereiten, um einen Vergleich zu ermöglichen. Danach werde entschieden, welche Fassung, die von Rosner oder die von Daisenberger, von ihm für 1980 vorbereitet werden sollte. Schwaighofer ging mit seinen Schülern zielsicher und tatkräftig ans Werk. Er verfertigte Bühnenmodelle und stellte sie im September 1975 im Passionspielhaus der Öffentlichkeit vor. Die Gemeinde stellte für die Probeaufführung DM 500 000,— bereit. Die Bayerische Landesstiftung, ein Zusammenschluß der Bayerischen Staatsbank und der Bayerischen Vereinsbank zur Förderung der Wissenschaft, Kunst, Religion, Kultur unter dem Vorsitz des bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten Dr. Alfons Goppel, steuerte einen Zuschuß von DM 400 000,— bei. Um die auf den ersten Blick hoch erscheinende Summe in die rechten Relationen zu rücken, sei an die 13 Millionen erinnert, die die Gemeinde für den Bau des Wellenbades investierte.

Nunmehr formierten sich die beiden Flügel, die Rosner, die Daisenberger. Ein Passionspielveteran, der 1970 die Rolle des Annas übernommen hatte, Melchior Breitsamter (78) machte sich zum Sprecher der „Bürgerinitiative Oberammergau“. Eine Unterschriftensammlung im Frühjahr 1976 erbrachte über 1800 Befürworter für die Beibehaltung des Daisenbergerpiels. Zu ihnen gehörte der Erste Bürgermeister Ernst Zwink. Aufgrund dieses Votums

wird der Hälfte der wahlberechtigten 3000 Einwohner bei 1000 Katholiken und 500 Protestanten wurde beim Gemeinderat befragt, bis Ende Juli 1976 eine Befragung aller stimmberechtigten Bürger durchgeführt. Zwei Fragen sollten beantwortet werden:

1. Für Daisenberger oder für Rosner?

2. Absetzung der Probeaufführung des Rosner-Spiels, falls sich eine Mehrheit für Daisenberger entscheidet.

Als eventueller Spielleiter kam Hans Maur ins Gespräch, den auch der Kulturausschuß nominiert hatte.

Mit zehn zu sechs Stimmen wurde der Antrag im Gemeinderat abgelehnt. Die Gemeinde ist gespalten. Um zu verstehen, wie sehr die Entscheidung die Gemüter beschäftigt, muß man berücksichtigen, daß die meisten Stimmberechtigten in irgendeiner Form an der Aufführung der Passio, nicht wegen schon jahrzehntelang, aktiv beteiligt waren. Das schafft auch emotionale Bindungen. Dazu kommt die Frage Breitsamters: „1970 hatten wir die erfolgreichsten Spiele. Warum will man das ändern?“

Die Reformpartei kann im Gegenzug darauf hinweisen, daß die Spiele in der Vergangenheit laufend verändert worden sind und daß selbst eine revidierte Daisenberger-Fassung ohne große grundsätzliche Eingriffe nicht befriedigen konnte. Außerdem fand sich ein beachtliches Arbeitsteam zur Vorbereitung einer Rosner-Passio zusammen. Die Textbearbeitung besorgte Dr. Alois Fink vom Bayerischen Rundfunk. Ulrich Dibelius hat die Musik von Franz Xaver Richter²⁵ ausgewählt, der einige Jahre Rosners Kollege an der Ritterakademie in Ettal gewesen war, bevor er nach Mannheim überwechselte und als Domkapellmeister in Straßburg starb. Prof. Wolfgang Fortner und Uwe Lohmann haben Richters Musik für die Aufführung eingerichtet. Prof. Hermann Handerer, Regensburg, besorgte die Einstudierung. Als Spielleiter fungiert der unermüdliche Hans Schwaighofer, dem die Möglichkeiten seiner Fachschule zur Verfügung stehen.

Die Probeaufführung erleichterte jedenfalls eine sachgerechte Urteilsbildung und verhalf dazu, Information statt Emotion wirksam werden zu lassen. Um vergleichen zu können, war sie unumgänglich. Es ist jedenfalls anzuerkennen, daß die „Bürgerinitiative“ auf Flugblättern dazu aufgefordert hatte, bei der Probeaufführung jede Kundgebung zu unterlassen, sondern nach „vorurteilslosem Besuch“ in Ruhe abzuwageln. Zwar scheinen die Fronten auch hiernach weiterhin verhärtet. Fischer sprach von einer „brauchbaren Reformgrundlage“, dem Christusdarsteller von 1950 und 1960 und gefeierten Spielleiter 1970, Anton Preisinger, wurden „die Bedenken voll bestätigt“. Wie viele Einwohner werden angesichts der auf-

...igten Fiktion das Gesicht des
...en Bürgermeisters, Rechtsanwalt
... auf Fischer, folgt, der aus einem
...verfechter Darsenbürgers zu einem Be-
...wörter Rosneis geworden ist und der
... als der ehemalige Christusdarsteller
... von 1970 im jetzigen Rosneispiel die
... Rolle des Pilatus übernommen hat?
... Oder hat die Probeaufführung im Au-
...gust 1977 den gegenteiligen Effekt be-
...wirkt und klare Mehrheitsverhältnisse
... geschaffen? (Fortsetzung folgt)

Ein Domorganist erinnert sich

Herrich Wismeyer, München

Einen heiteren Rückblick auf ein bewegtes Musikerleben ist in diesen Tagen in der Herderbucherei erschienen: „Mit allen Registern“ Der langjährige Münchner Domorganist Pralat Wismeyer lädt seine Leser dazu ein, ihn durch die Kirchen und Konzertsäle Europas zu begleiten. Wir entnehmen den Erinnerungen folgenden Abschnitt:

Was ist das Schönste in meiner Wohnung am Frauenplatz? Der Blick von dem großen Arbeits- und Musikzimmer Auf der einen Seite grüßen die Türme des Alten Peter und des Rathauses zum Fenster herein, gegen Westen schaut man das Dombach entlang auf die ragenden Türme der Frauenkirche.

An einer Innenwand steht, zu beiden Seiten flankiert von Kruppenschaukästen, der Bücher-schrank. Dort haben im Bereich der theologischen Werke u. a. die Bücher und Schriften von Romano Guardini, dem großen Anreger der liturgischen Bewegung, ihren Ehrenplatz. Diese Schriften, vom Autor signiert, stammen von einer persönlichen, irgendwie im musikalischen Zusammenhang stehenden Begegnung mit dem großen Gelehrten.

Als die Menschen in der Zeit nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg, ermüdet und abgekämpft, einen wahren Hunger nach Geistigem und Künstlerischem hatten, mußten die Abendvorträge viel Beachtung finden, die Professor Guardini — damals eben von Berlin an die Münchner Universität berufen — in verschiedenen Kirchen des Stadtteils Schwabing hielt.

Ich fühlte mich einigermaßen geschmeichelt, als mich Guardini eines schönen Tages einlud, in seine Wohnung zu kommen.

Es war eine beinahe komische Situation, in die ich den großen Denker in seiner Wohnung in der Königundenstraße antraf. Es muß kurz vorher der Möbelwagen ausgeladen worden sein, der Guardinis Hab und Gut von Berlin nach München zu bringen hatte. Durch ein Gewirr von Möbelstücken und Bucherkisten bahnte sich der Professor mühsam den Weg, um einigen hilfreichen Damen Anweisungen über das Wohin der einzelnen Stücke zu erteilen. Der zierlich gebaute Mann mit dem Gelehrtenkopf erwirkte dabei irgendwie den Eindruck eines ruhenden Hilfsboten.

In einer einigermaßen ruhigen Ecke der Wohnung legte mir dann Guardini

seinen Plan vor. Er lud mich ein, seine Vorträge in der Ursulakirche mit einem Stück an der Orgel einzuleiten und ausklingen zu lassen. Er schätzte die Bedeutung der Musik, so sagte er, als Wegbereiterin für das gesprochene Wort hoch ein. Gute Erfahrungen, die er in Berlin mit dieser Verbindung von Wort und Musik gemacht hatte, würden ihn veranlassen, auch in München diese Form fortzusetzen. Er würde, so setzte er hinzu, die Hörer zu Beginn des Zyklus darauf aufmerksam machen, daß diese Orgelmusik ein organischer Bestandteil der Abendvorträge sei als Beitrag zur Vertiefung der Meditation.

Und so durfte ich denn, zuerst in St. Ursula, später in St. Sylvester, als Famulus des berühmten Professors, tätig sein, bis dann Guardini die sonntägliche Universitätspredigt in St. Ludwig, von einem breiteren Publikum übernahm.

Ich gab mir bei der Fählung nach geeigneten, einprägsamen Stücken auf der Orgelliteratur, etwa im Stil von Bachs Orgelbüchlein, viel Mühe. Jedenfalls hat die Hörergemeinde Guardini dabei gelernt, daß auch ein leise gespieltes Orgelstück eine abschließend Wirkung haben kann.

Als Zeichen des Dankes erhielt ich von Guardini jeweils zu Weihnachten und Ostern Druckausgaben seiner Ansprachen, Auszüge aus seinen Vorlesungen über Ethik oder seine Deutung von Rilke und Holderlin mit persönlicher Widmung des Verfassers.

Vielleicht bin ich einer der wenigen Menschen, die einen Blick tun durfte in das Verhältnis Guardinis zur Musik. Er gestand ehrlich ein, daß er bei Musikhören sich nicht Rechenschaft darüber geben könne, worin der eigentliche Genuß bestünde. Beim Nachhauseweg von einem der Abendvorträge äußerte er mir gegenüber den Wunsch, er möchte sich einmal von einem Musiker erklären lassen, was Homophonie und Polyphonie sei. Die Folge dieser Frage war, daß ich den Professor eines schönen Nachmittags in mein Wohnung zu Gast hatte. Ich setzte mich an ein Cembalo und versuchte, anhand eines vierstimmigen Bach-Choralsatzes und einer zweistimmigen Invention von Bach dem wißbegierigen Gelehrten den Gegensatz von Miteinander und Gegeneinander klarzumachen, den man meinen Fingern ablesen konnte.

Bei Guardini handelte es sich, wie

22 W. Flemming RGG 24 130
 23 L. Kretzenbacher: Passionstrauch und Christi-Leiden-Spiel in den Südtiroler Alpenländern. Salzburg 1952. R. Steinböck. Die deutschen Ost- und Passionsspiele des Mittelalters (Kölner Germanistische Studien IV) 1950. Beirbeitet die geschilderten Spiele nicht als Verwirklichung, sondern als Einbruch der Kirche in die Welt.
 24 Flemming aao 135. Vgl. A. Hartmann, Das Oberammergau-Passion-Spiel in seiner ältesten Gestalt. Leipzig 1899. 10 ff. Reprint 1968. Schaller 2 aao 1. Aus der Mischung zwischen dem von katholischer Frömmigkeit geprägten mittelalterlichen Aufwuchs des Volksschauspiels und dem protestantisch gefärbten humanistischen Meisterstück, für das aus der gleichen Stadt entsproß, also das Oberammergau-Spiel, das später einmal alle Christen ohne Unterschied der Konfession erfreuen sollte.
 25 H. Pönbacher in M. Spindler, Handbuch der bayerischen Geschichte unter Berufung auf Günther Müller: Geschichte der deutschen Seele. Freiburg 1953. 217. Rosconi wurde ediert von O. Mader. Texte des Oberammergau-Passion-Spiels. Hildesheim kritische Ausgabe. Göttingen 1919. N. Helzel. Alpland und die Barmherzigen (Pönbacher und Kothlauer). 1970 spricht von einer einzigartigen Verbindung zwischen der intellektuell unterbauten, künstlerischen Höhe der Oberammergauzeit und der handfesten neuen Realistik des Volksschauspiels.
 26 Zur Bearbeitung von P. Weiss bemerkt Schaller 2 aao 40: „Die Sprüche verzieltete fast ganz auf mundartliche Anklänge und legt somit den Grund für das künftige starke Interesse aller deutschen Sagen an diesem Spiel. Die ganze Teufelsbräuterei (in Rosneis Passionsnovelle) und sämtliche Allegorien sind von der Bühne verbannt. Dedes Passionsmusik würdigt R. Münster. Rotius Dedler (1779-1822). Ein Lebensbild des Komponisten der Oberammergau-Passionsmusik. München 1909. Ihac Stärke ist die Echtheit ihrer Empfindung, ihre Natürlichkeit und Volkstümlichkeit. Dedler kommt mit seinem Schaffen noch aus der Tradition süddeutscher Kirchenmusik im 18. Jahrhundert.“ Die Passionsmusik Dedlers wurde zur Aufführung 1939 von Eugen Papst bearbeitet. Schaller 2 aao 54 f.
 27 M. Deutlinger. Wallfahrt nach Oberammergau. Mit einem Nachwort von J. Hollerer. München 1914. Krause-Lang aao 121 verweist auf einschlägige französische Veröffentlichungen. Auf Roman: Un mystère de la passion représenté au 19. et 20. siècle. Paris 1881. Blondel und 1909. Bremond mit den erwähnten Abhandlungen.
 28 Krause-Lang aao 10 mit Nachweisen aao 124.
 29 S. L. d. n. F. Senather. Regulatio von 1567 wurde im evangelischen Bereich der reformierten Kirche als der kirchliche Stil schlechthin favorisiert, während sich die katholische Kirche zu keiner einzigen Stilempfehlung entschied. C. Jodok, Vom gewählten zum erzwungenen Stil. Notizen zu Kirchenbauten in der Diözese Speyer 1871 bis 1875. Archiv für Mittelhochland Kirchengeschichte 28 (1916) 240. Vgl. K. E. O. Fritsch. Der Kirchenbau des Protestantismus von der Reformation bis zur Gegenwart. Berlin 1931. 221-220.
 30 Schaller 1, aao 8. Schaller 2 aao 52: „Atypisch 19. Jahrhundert, aber dürfte die charakteristische Frömmigkeit anzusehen sein, die echt und ansprechend aus Darsenbürgers Arbeit hervorgeht, niemand wehrt oder beleidigt und doch, wie ein tiefes seelisches Erlebnis vermittelt.“
 31 Vgl. M. Blondel. L'Action. Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique. Paris 1935. 115-9 und L'Action 2. Bde. Paris 1937.
 32 Blondel aao 69.
 33 Blondel aao 79. Vgl. den Sammelband von Schaller mit Beiträgen von W. P. Eckert, Das traditionelle Passionspiel und sein Verhältnis zum Drama (23-31). K. Schubert der Prozess Jesu in der neueren exegetischen Literatur (32-42). 1971. J. O. Fritsch. Der Passions Jesu (43-66). 74) dazu W. Sardes. Antisemitismus bei den Christen. Gedanken zur christlichen Judenfeindschaft am Beispiel der Oberammergau-Passionspiele. Leutradorf 1970.
 34 Vgl. I. Imbrock. Die Passionsbelehre der Synoptiker im Lichte der neuen Exegese. Schaller 1 aao 110.
 35 Fritsch. Schaller 1 aao 11.
 36 Zitiert in der Vgl. Rotius in Münster. MGG II (1943) 42-46. S. v. Richter. Lit. X.

„PASSIO NOVA“ IM OBERAMMERGAU zwischen religiösem Volksspiel und religiösem Festspiel

Ein Diskussionsbeitrag aus pastoraler Sicht (3)

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Josef Georg Ziegler, Mainz

V

Rosners „Passio nova“ 1977

Fine im einzelnen begründete Entscheidung zwischen Daisenberger und Rosner ist für den Außenstehenden nicht weniger schwierig als für die beteiligten Oberammergauer. Ein stichhaltiger Vergleich erforderte eine eingehendere Analyse der beiden Textbücher und der jeweiligen Begleitmusik, als es hier möglich ist. Es werden deshalb mehr oder weniger subjektive Eindrücke mitgeteilt. Außerdem verstand sich die Probeaufführung als ausbaufähiger und korrekturbedürftiger Entwurf, für deren Vollziehung die Zeit von Weihnachten bis August verwendet werden konnte. Die letzte Aufführung von Daisenberger-Dedler ging nach einer Finstudie von Weihnachten bis Pfingsten über die Bühne.

Zunächst fallen mehrere Übereinstimmungen auf. Beide Spiele vollziehen sich auf mehreren Bühnen. Zur Darstellung der eigentlichen Handlung tritt der Chor, der die lebenden Bilder aus dem Alten Testament erklärt und durch die Interpretation des Handlungsvorgangs die Zuschauer einbezieht. Die Untermauerung durch Musik und die offene Bühne mit Vorder- und Hinterbühne und mit dem einseitigen Blick auf die Landschaft, die Massenszenen, die Aufteilung der Laufstüchdigen Dauer in zwei Spielzeiten sind beiden Aufführungen gemeinsam. Außerbiblische Szenen, wie der Abschied Jesu von seiner Mutter oder die Überreichung des Schwefelstüchdes an Veronika, fehlen ebenso wenig.

Die Verschiedenheiten sind trotz der mehr äußeren Parallelen tiefgreifend. Während Daisenberger in zwei gleich langen Hälften vormittags und nachmittags zur Aufführung gelangte, dauert das Rosnerspiel von 16 bis 18 und von 20.15 bis 23.00 Uhr. Die Prosafassung Daisenbergers, die auf nicht wenige altvertraute Wendungen aus der Bibel zurückgreifen konnte, weicht einer Bearbeitung in Versform. Die volkstümlichen Melodien Dedlers wurden durch die anspruchsvollere Kirchenmusik Richters ersetzt. Die ansprechenden Pastellfarben in den Kostümen wichen harten Kontrasten. Die lebenden Bilder aus dem Alten Testament wurden auf ein Viertel, nämlich fünf, reduziert.

Die Problemzentration bemühte sich nicht bloß bei der Wiederbelebung der alttestamentlichen Vorbilder um eine szenische Stilisierung und verdichtende Vereinfachung, indem sie im Gegensatz zu früher möglichst wenige Personen, wie Josef und seine Brüder, Joab und Amas, Kam und Abel, Abraham und Isaak, Job, auftreten ließ. Dafür suchte bei der Übergangsszene und bei der Auferstehung die Engel der seelischen Erregung Rechnung zu tragen, indem sie vom Wort zum Gesang übergehen. Über all diesen Differenzen läßt sich mit guten Gründen sowohl ein Für wie ein Wider anführen.

Den entscheidenden Unterschied dokumentiert bei aller Übereinstimmung in der theologischen Auffassung, daß letztlich der ungründliche Heilswille des Vaters die radikale Form des stellvertretenden Heilstodes seines göttlichen Sohnes beschlossen hat „zur Erlösung der Welt“, das Aufzeigen der Schuld dieser Welt. Eindringlich und unausweichlich macht der Schutzgeist, der Chor, immer wieder darauf aufmerksam: „Sagt nicht die Juden dort verrieten ihren Mann, wir alle haben das und oft genug getan“ (Textbuch 1977, S. 35).

Das buhnenwirksame Mittel, um diese Tatsache einprägsam vor Augen zu führen, ist die *Personalisierung menschlicher Laster*. Die Versuchlichkeit des Menschen wird durch die raffinierten Verführungskünste des grun-gebl gewandelten Neides („der Priesterschaft das Volk entführen, das wird sie wohl am meisten ruhren“) und des von einem Geldschüttler begleiteten Geizes („er muß sich zu den Jungern wenden, den Judas noch weit mehr verblenden“) aufgedeckt und ausgenutzt. Daraus folgt der Strategie des Hasses, welche in den Hölle nzen zusammen mit Luzifer abgesprochen wird. Wo anders wird in einer derart verständlichen Eindringlichkeit das Wiken des Todes im Sold der Sünde und Satans entlarvt wie hier auf der Bühne?

Der unermüdlich immer wieder ansetzende Streit der Laster um die Seele des Menschen, die oftindige Kapitulation des Menschen, aber auch die oftmalige und letztlich eidgefüllte Niederlage des Posens, dies ansüchlich vorzuführen ist der große Vorzug des Rosner-Textes. Sein Konzept läßt den Kreuzes-

... als die Hochflut einer Liebe, von der göttlichen Liebe, verstehen. Doch offen es neben der hochgezeichneten Perspektive psychologisch ein „im den Blick für die Situation des Menschen und der Menschheit und fordert mit *Eutychung* heraus. Man denkt an Augustins „Gottesstaat“, Versuch des Reich der Finsternis mit dem Reich des Lichtes im Kampfe liegt. Zur biblischen Begründung lese man in der Geheimen Offenbarung 12, 7-12, wo der Kampf Michaels mit dem Drachen und „die Vollmacht seines (Gottes) Geistes“ in einem grandiosen Genetide „geschuldert werden“.

Daß als die eigentlichen Gegenspieler von Jesus nicht die Juden, sondern Satan und die Laster fungieren, wird vor allem in den Szenen deutlich, in denen innerhalb des Höher Rates die Meinungen der Befürworter und der Ablehner des Todes Jesu aufeinanderprallen. Damit ist als notwendige Konsequenz auch eine unberechtigte und den Heilsplan Gottes verfälschende Alleinschuld der Juden erledigt.

Bei all den „szenisch sehr wirkungsvollen“ Vorzügen der Daisenbergerfassung im Detail und trotz nicht geringer Sympathien für deren Sprache, Musik und Inszenierung — das tiefgründende Sichtbarmachen der Motive der Passion des Herrn im Rosner-Text ist ein Positivum, das schwer ins Gewicht fällt.

VI

Überlegungen

„Oberammergau glaubt heute, seinem Ruf und gerade seiner Tradition einen neuen Versuch schuldig zu sein.“ Damit schließt das Vorwort des Textbuches 1977. Wer wünschte diesem Versuch nicht einen gesegneten Erfolg vor allem dann, wenn das Spiel als eine Form christlicher Verkündigung bejaht wird. Deshalb seien im folgenden in aller Bescheidenheit einige Überlegungen zur Probeaufführung zusammengefaßt. Es werden persönliche momentane Eindrücke geäußert, die aus nur einem Probe-spiel gewonnen wurden und deshalb mit allem gebotenen Vorbehalt aufzunehmen sind.

Maßgebend für ihre Äußerung ist die Erkenntnis: Gott tut in seinem Erlösungswerk zwar alles. Aber er tut es nicht allein. Er will den Menschen beteiligen, indem dieser seine Anlagen, seine Talente, die in ihm hinein-gelegt worden sind, zur Entfaltung bringt und einsetzt — auch und erst recht bei der Weitergabe und Vermittlung des Heilsangebots Jesu Christi im Nebeneinander des Raumes und im Nacheinander der Zeit. Das bisher vor allem unter Teil I Gesagte wird bei den folgenden Ausführungen vorausgesetzt und nicht mehr eigens erwähnt.

Zunächst sei auf die Zeiteinteilung eingegangen. Es scheint weder nötig

noch angebracht, die Spielhälfte zu kurzen. Doch sollten zwei gleich lange Spielzeiten angestrebt werden. Ware es nicht möglich, den Beginn der Passionsfeier Verrat des Judas (S. 65) auf den Selbstmord des Judas (109) zu verschieben? Der zweite Teil wurde dann mit dem Tod und der Auferstehung Jesu enden. Damit entfiel die Belastung durch die Überlänge von fast drei Stunden in der jetzigen zweiten Spielhälfte.

Außerdem empfiehlt es sich aus vielerlei Gründen, die nicht eigens benannt zu werden brauchen²⁶², das Spiel vom Nachmittag und Abend auf den Vormittag und Nachmittag zu verlegen, wie es bisher immer Brauch gewesen ist. Die Kosten der Beleuchtung und ihrer Maschinerie spielen dabei keine wesentliche Rolle. Es scheint vielmehr technisch einfach nicht notwendig, bei entsprechender Ausleuchtung der Hinterbühne, bei Verwendung von Vorhängen usw. auf die Nacht auszuweichen. Sicher wurde durch eine Aufteilung auf die zwei Tageshälften weit mehr gewonnen als verloren. Mit der Rückkehr zur traditionellen Übung wurden außerdem wohl manche Ressentiments abgebaut werden und die Verdächtigung, „anders“ einfacher als Synonym für „besser“ anzusehen, entkräftet.

Die stellenweise antiquiert und gekünstelt wirkende Reimfassung ist nicht und in jeder Hinsicht ein Vorteil. Dies Urteil verstärkt sich, wenn man sich die Verse auf ihre sprachliche Gestaltung und ihre Verständlichkeit für den Zuhörer näher anschaut. Ein Beispiel für viele sei angeführt: „da er die Kranken hat geheilt — und ihnen den Gesund ertheilt?“ (15). Die Reimfassung von Versen stellt an den Sprecher große Anforderungen, erst recht, wenn es sich um Knittelverse handelt. Sollte man nicht, um der Volkssprache nahe zu bleiben, bei entscheidenden Stellen auf den authentischen Prosatext der Bibel zurückgreifen? Schon jetzt wird bei der Verlesung des Urteilspruches des Pilatus auf Prosa übergegangen (145 ff). Die Worte Jesu am Ölberg, die Einsetzungsworte beim Abendmahl und die Worte Jesu am Kreuze bieten sich in ihrer intensiven Dichte dazu an. Es wirkt nicht überzeugend, wenn man Jesus am Kreuze beten hört: „O Vater in des Himmels Zinnen, — ich bitte dich, verzeihe ihnen“ oder „Weib! Den statt meiner ich benenne, — Johannes, für dein Sohn erkenne“ (169-171)²⁶³. Doch sind vor allem in den unisono wiederholten Schlußversen des Chores, der Holle oder des Hohen Rates einprägsame Formulierungen gelungen, z. B. „Es ist beschlossen, er soll sterben — eh wir mit unserem Reich verderben“ (18).

Nächst der sprachlichen scheint die musikalische Gestaltung in mancher Hinsicht einer Revision zu bedürfen. Durch den naheliegenden Rückgriff auf Rosners Zeitgenossen Richter ist ein adäquates, wenn auch akademisch wir-

rende Pendant zu dem nicht volkstümlich literarische Stoff der Passion gefunden worden. Sollen nicht viele Partien aufzufrischen sein? Von einer „kantablen Milobek“²⁶⁴ habe ich nicht allzu viel gehört. Insgesamt hatte ich den Eindruck, daß die musikalische Untermalung auf die verschiedenenartigen Szenenfolgen nicht besonders einfühlsam eingegangen ist. Vielleicht konnte trotz aller Befürchtung, daß viele Köche den Brei verderben, als Ex-Parte Dr. Robert Munster, der Direktor der Musiksammlung der Bayerischen Staatsbibliothek München, beigezogen werden. Von ihm als einem Kenner der musikalischen Literatur Richters dürfte mancher Hinweis erwartet werden. Doch werden die Ausstellungen mit aller Reserve geäußert, da ein bloß einmaliges Hören kein fundiertes Urteil erlaubt.

Die beiden Engelarien sollte man allerdings besser streichen. Sie sind gut gemeint, werden aber wohl kaum verstanden. Dagegen könnte man überlegen, ob die Spannung der Zuschauer beim mitsprechenden letzten Szenenbild, der Verherrlichung Gottes durch die himmlischen Chöre, nicht durch den gemeinsamen Gesang von „Großer Gott“ „mit Pauken und Trompeten“ aufgefangen werden sollte. Das gemeinsame Lied schließt Darsteller wie Schauspieler zusammen im gemeinsamen Vollzug dessen, was das Spiel im eigentlichen Sinn ist und sein will, ein Akt der Gottesverehrung. Bekannt sind die Choräle in den Passionsmusiken Bachs. Auch in früheren Passionsspielen waren die Zuschauer immer wieder durch den Volksgesang in die Handlung einbezogen worden. Ob dieser Vorschlag praktikabel ist, kann nur an Ort und Stelle ausgemacht werden.

Die Inszenierung gibt sich nicht ohne Erfolg und viele Einfälle sichtlich Mühe. Angesichts der kurzen Vorbereitungszeit gebührt ihr eine ungeteilte Anerkennung. Sie hat auszugleichen, wenn der Text die verschiedenen Spannungspole zu wenig berücksichtigt. Das Passionsspiel soll theaterwirksam sein und zugleich dem religiösen Verkündigungscharakter Rechnung tragen. Es soll, ohne in Platitiden abzusinken, aussagekräftig sein und zugleich als Spiel des Volkes für das Volk überzeugen. Es soll den verschiedenen Ansprüchen, Erwartungen, Bildungsniveaus der Zuschauer entgegenkommen und zugleich der Verantwortung gegenüber dem religiösen Stoff wie gegenüber den Besuchern gleichermaßen gerecht werden. Daß diese schier undurchführbare Aufgabe jeden Theatermann ebenso reizt und mit alterativen Problemlösungen konfrontiert, ist zu bedenken. Auch hier gilt wie überall im Leben keine Extreme.

Ein begründeter, nicht willfähriger Kompromiß bietet sich als der erfolgversprechende Weg an. Er entspricht

dem unbedingten Bedürfnis aller bei der Gestaltung, bei jeder Entscheidung in Theaterspiel gilt, die Harmonie in 2. Kor. 1,5 je und je einzustrichen: „Nicht uns selbst verhängen wir ja, sondern Christus Jesus als den Herrn — uns selbst nur als eure Knechte um Jesu willen“.

Deshalb werden die Bestimmungspausen angenehm empfunden, die im Anschluß an die lebenden Bilder oder die Lastenszenen und den darauf folgenden Chor durch die Musik eingeschoben werden. Es kommt dabei nicht auf die Tatsache und weniger auf die Länge an. Zu viel beziehungsweise zu lange wie weniger. Wie schon erwähnt, sind Jesus und die Laster die beiden Widerparte. Treten sie als solche deutlich und ausgewogen in Erscheinung? Die Hottenszenen werden durch die unheimlichen Orgeln einer atonalen Schlagzeugbatterie leitmotivisch geschickt eingeführt. Ebenso wird der Hohe Rat jeweils mit Trompeten angekündigt. Eine leitmotivische Hervorhebung Jesu durch eine bestimmte Melodie der Streicher fehlt. Oder ich habe sie überhört.

Der gesamte Hottenspektakel mit gelungenen Anleihen aus Matthias Grünewald und Hieronymus Bosch wird fünfmal mit Bravour wie ein „demonischer Peichtentanz“ beinahe „zelebriert“. Schon rein optisch und akustisch werden dadurch die Gewichte verschoben. Mein Vorschlag ist, der gesamten hollischen Versammlung mit Luzifer am Anfang bei der Beschlußfassung (3-8) und am Ende beim Eingeständnis der Niederlage (185 ff) die Ehre zu geben. Wenn es sein muß, könnte noch die vermeintliche Siegesfeier nach der Verurteilung Jesu (149 ff) toleriert werden. Bei den zwei „besser“ die übrigen Szenen wäre eine weniger aufwendige Besprechung unter den Laternen ohne Luzifer und seinen Hofstaat situationsgerechter für den motivierten Fortgang der Handlung und ergiebiger für einen verständnisvollen Mitvollzug (62-65, 121 u. ev. 149 ff). Die Gefahr, durch allzu dickes Auftragen ins Unglaubwürdige und Lächerliche abzugleiten, darf nicht uberschen werden. Darum meine ich, man sollte es dabei bewachen lassen, daß Judas sich mit teuflischer Assistenten aufhängt. Die anschließende Hottensfahrt kann man sich besser sparen. Sonst schlägt die Tragik allzu leicht in Gaudi um. Außerer Höhepunkt eines Passionsspiels ist die Kreuzigungsszene. Den inneren Sinn des stellvertretenden Gehorsamsleidens Christi „bis zum Tod am Kreuze“ (Phil 2,8) enthüllt die Auferstehung. Darum erklärt der Auferstandene den beiden Jüngern auf dem Wege nach Emmaus: „Mußt nicht der Messias dies leiden, um so in seine Herrlichkeit einzugehen“ (Lk 24,26)? Infolgedessen wäre es unsinnig, mit der Kreuzigung aufzuhören. Doch wird jeder Versuch, die Auferstehung selbst darzustellen, immer mehr als frucht-

dig bleiben. Das gilt auch für den entmaterialisierenden Versuch, durch Lesentreflexe den metemprischen Vorgang für die Sinne fassbar zu machen. Die Aufstehung selbst hat niemand gesehen. Darum kann und soll sie auch niemand im Nachbild zu Gesicht bekommen. Aber den Aufstehenden hat man gesehen. Darum muß diese, wie in früheren Textfassungen, im Krise seiner Jungfräulichkeit erscheinen. Die Thomaszene und noch besser die Mission des Jüdischen Apostels hängen sich an die Szenen hatten Gewicht im Zusammenhang früherer Missionen mit dem Herrn. Die gezielte Fälschung des Aufstehenden als Garkoch in der Begegnung mit Maria Magdalena hat wohl allgemein enttäuscht.

Ob man die Brutalität des Todes mit dem Akt, hat eines überdimensionierten Püggels oder besser mit dem der gewohnten Sinne veranschaulicht, ruht an ein generelles Selbstverständnis der Inszenierung, inwiefern sie sich als didaktische Form der Verkündigung versteht. Inwiefern soll das Bestreben, den Zuschauer zur bewußten Identifizierung mit dem Wort und der Tat des Passionsgeschickens anzuregen, dadurch erleichtert werden, daß man auf allvertraute Schemata zurückgreift, um ihm bei seiner geistigen Position abzuholen? Soll man sich also seiner Sprache und seiner Bilder bedienen, damit er sich wiedererkennt und leichter in der Handlung verortet? Oder soll der Zuschauer durch ungeübte und auftrittele Scholtherapie aus den einfahrenden Denk- und Vorstellungsweisen herausgeworfen werden? In dem einen Falle droht die Gefahr, daß er sich in seiner bisherigen defizienten Haltung allzu leicht bestätigt fühlt, im anderen Falle, daß er sich unwillig oder unbewußt sperrt und die Handlung außen an seiner Seelenhaut abläuft, ohne einzudringen.

Es sei mir erlaubt, noch einmal eine damit zusammenhängende Versuchung moderner Didaktik, auch Religionsdidaktik, anzusprechen, nämlich das Bestreben, es möglichst anders zu machen als bisher. Niemand aber kann ungestraft die freundschaftliche Erfahrung negieren, die im Anschluß an Aristoteles die Formulierung gefunden hat „in medio stat visus“. In einem verantworteten Leben geht es nicht um Mittelmaßigkeit. Es ist vielmehr die jeweilige, je und je neu zu suchende Spannungsmittel zwischen extremen Polen anzustreben. Das Einstimmen und Durchhalten der Polarität, der Spannung, und nicht das Ausweichen in Polarisierung durch die Neutralisation eines der beiden Spannungspole ist das Grundgesetz jedweden Lebens.

Neben der ausgeprägten Profilierung der beiden Kontrahenten Jesu und der Hölle, ist die Gegenüberstellung des Kontrastes zwischen dem Befehl der Menge beim Hinweg Jesu in Je-

rusalem und dem Stammungsumschwung beim „Kreuzige“ ein dankbares Objekt jeder Inszenierung. Die biographischen Missverständnisse in der Darsenberger-Fassung sind unvergessen. Sie dürfen auch beim Rosner Spiel nicht fehlen. Aber gerade Missverständnisse benötigen eine längere Zeit zur Einstudierung als für die Probenaufführung zur Verfügung stand. Es steht noch viel Probearbeit bevor. Wegfallen darf ohne Verlust für das Verständnis der Handlung die wortlose Auferstehung der Hölle aus dem Tempel.

Die Kreuzigung wird handwerklich geradezu minutiös nachvollzogen. Wird hier nicht zu viel des Guten getan? Es soll nicht Mitleid, sondern Mitleiden, das in der Mitwelt weiterwirkt, hervorgerufen werden.

Neben diesen mehr als Anfragen gedachten Bemerkungen steht und fällt jedes Spiel mit der Überzeugungskraft schauspielerischer Leistungen. Mir ist noch in lebhafter Erinnerung, wie Judas (Schwaighofer) 1950 und 1960 von der Verzweiflung wie ein durres Herbstlaub im Winde über die Bühne gewirbelt wurde. Allen stockte der Atem. Der egozentrische Judas und der reumütige Petrus sind zwei Männer, deren gegensätzlicher Lebensweg ein dankbares Klischee für eine kontrastierende Nachzeichnung abgibt. Eine Glanzleistung gelang dem Neid in seiner Doppelrolle als Neid und als Rebi. Dagegen fiel es uns ab. Mit der überzeugenden Darstellung dieser Rolle steht und fällt jedes Passionspiel. Das Urteil, der an Tüchtigkeit amsteht. Man darf den Jesus spielen“ (FAZ) ist unangebracht. Doch scheint der Theologe Hans Jablonka (37) für diese ungleichlich schwierige Rolle überfordert, wenn er auch im zweiten Teil an Sicherheit gewinnt. Elisabeth Jablonka (27) als Maria und Max Jablonka (27) als Kaiphas scheinen demgegenüber entwicklungsfähig.

Insgesamt muß vor allem die schon erwähnte schwierige Aussprache der Reimfassung verständlicher eingeübt werden. Aber wem sage ich das? Bischof Schwarzenböck artikuliert den allgemeinen Eindruck, wenn er dar auf verweist, daß „noch die aufwendige Szenerie und die gestalterische Kraft der Laiendarsteller, vor allem bei den anspruchsvollen Szenen, zu sehr auseinanderklaffen“.

Es braucht nicht eigens betont zu werden und muß es doch. Das Passionspiel steht und fällt mit der religiösen Überzeugung der Laienspieler. Das ist mir evident zum Bewußtsein gekommen, als Udo Jürgens versuchte, die Bekehrung des „Jedermann“ bei den diesjährigen Silbinger Festspielen nachzuvollziehen. Das Passionspiel lebt und stirbt mit dem glaubwürdigen Sichtbarwerden seiner geistlichen Dimension. Der Orts, geistliche hat hier eine unverzichtbare, nicht geringe Aufgabe und Verantwortung bei der Vorbereitung

und bei der Durchführung sowohl hinsichtlich der Spieler wie des Spiels. Ob die Fälschung sich herausstellt, ist wohl nicht zu erreichen und ist wohl auch nicht nötig. Aber Zurückhaltung wäre angebracht und verleiht ein Angebot von Exerziten für diejenigen Spieler, die sich durch eine intensive Einstudierung vorbereiten wollen.

Es entspricht einem soziologischen Gesetz, daß der einzelne als Glied einer Gemeinschaft weitgehend von der Stimmung in dieser Gemeinschaft geprägt und bestimmt wird. Darum ist es wichtig und, wie mir scheint, unvermeidlich, daß das ganze Dorf geradezu von einem Passionspielieber erfaßt wird. Das muß sich auch äußerlich kundtun. Das Waschenlassen der Haare bei der männlichen Bevölkerung im Aufführungsjahr trug vielleicht dieser Erkenntnis unbewußt Rechnung. Es sollte nicht abgeschafft werden.

Als Laienspieler kommt eben die gesamte Bevölkerung von Oberammergau in Betracht, auch diejenigen, die sich mit dem Rosner-Spiel nicht ohne weiteres anfreunden können, weil ihr Herz am Darsenberger-Spiel hängt. Das Gelingen des Passionsspiels wird nicht zuletzt dadurch bestimmt werden, inwiefern die Bevölkerung einmütig zusammenfindet und zusammensteht. Persönliche Empfindlichkeiten müssen hier gegenüber dem Dienst am Ganzen zurückstehen, so berechtigt und verständlich eine anfängliche Distanzierung gewesen sein mag. Was gewesen ist, ist gewesen. Es steht nichts Geringeres als die Zukunft des Spiels auf dem Spiele. Allen sei mit 1 Kor 14,20 gesagt: „Brüder, seid nicht Kinder an Verstand! Seid vielmehr Kinder an Bosheit, an Verstand, aber reife Menschen.“ Sicherlich würden manche Schwierigkeiten bei der Besetzung der Rollen leichter gelöst werden können, wenn sich alle in Betracht kommenden Bürger selbstlos zur Verfügung stellen würden und — das ist die unausweichliche Kehrseite — in die Auswahl einbezogen würden.

Das Passionspiel ist eine Sache des ganzen Dorfs und soll eine Sache des ganzen Dorfs bleiben. Deshalb sollten nach Möglichkeit keine Anleihen bei außerordentlichen Kräften gemacht werden. Diese Neuerung halte ich für folgenreicher und gefährlicher. Der Tolzer Knabenchor, die auswärtigen Musiker müssen und können unschwer durch eigene Kräfte beziehungsweise durch eine andere Regie ersetzt werden. Ein Passionspiel strebt keine Sensationen an. Wenn es das Charakteristikum des Spiels vom Leiden, Tod und Auferstehen Christi aufhebe oder verlieren würde, nämlich vom Volke für das Volk aufgeführt zu werden, wäre es um seine Besonderheit und seine Anziehungskraft geschehen. Otto, der Normalverbraucher, muß sich im Text wiederfinden. Sein Welt- und Glaubensverständnis muß angesprochen werden. Die chr-

Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion Oberammergau

An Herrn
Bürgermeister Ernst Zwink
und den Gemeinderat von Oberammergau

Oberammergau, den 28-4-78

Sehr geehrte Herren,

die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion hat in ihrer Mitgliederversammlung vom 23-4-78 die Vorstandschaft beauftragt eine Resolution mit folgendem Inhalt dem Gemeinderat von Oberammergau zu unterbreiten.

Die Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion lehnt eine Aufführung des Daisenbergerspiels 1980 ab.

Gründe:

1. Das Daisenbergerspiel ist in literarischer Hinsicht der Rosnerversion weit unterlegen.
2. Der Daisenbergertext entspricht nicht den Forderungen des 2. Vatikanischen Konzils und kann ihnen auch nicht angepaßt werden. Eine diesbezügliche Überarbeitung käme einer Neuschöpfung gleich.
3. Die Probe 1977 hat bewiesen, daß die Rosnerversion spielbar ist und sowohl vom Text wie auch von der Inszenierung weitaus stärker ist als das Daisenbergerspiel.
4. Äußerungen der katholischen und evangelischen Kirche, der jüdischen Seite und der Massenmedien die die Gemeinde eindeutig davor warnen zu Daisenberger zurück zu kehren, dürfen im Interesse der Dorfgemeinschaft nicht übergangen werden.

Die Mitglieder der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion fühlen sich deshalb verpflichtet, den Gemeinderat aufzufordern, auf keinen Fall den bestehenden Beschluß 1980 Rosner aufzuführen, umzustößen.

Sollte der Rosnerbeschluß dennoch vom Gemeinderat umgestoßen werden, so werden wir von unserem demokratischen Recht Gebrauch machen und eine Sache die nicht überzeugt und die nach unserer Ansicht nur Nachteile für Oberammergau bringt, nicht unterstützen. D.h. Aufgaben nicht übernehmen.

Mit vorzüglicher Hochachtung

die Vorstandschaft

Heinrich Bredius

c/o Kopien ergehen an samtl. Gemeinderatsmitglieder.

[end]

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TRANSLATION

ARBEITSGEMEINSCHAFT PASSION OBERAMMERGAU

To: Mayor Ernst Zwink
and the Town Council of Oberammergau

4/28/78

Gentlemen:

At its meeting on 4/23/78, the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion authorized its Board to present the following resolution to the Town Council of Oberammergau.

The Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion rejects (will not accept) a performance of the Daisenberger play in 1980.

Reasons:

1. In a literary sense, the Daisenberger play is inferior to the Rosner version.
2. The Daisenberger text does not conform to the requirements of Vatican Council II and cannot be made to conform. Any additionally revised version of Daisenberger will present exactly the same problem.
3. The test performances in 1977 showed that the Rosner version is viable and, further, that the text and general production is much stronger than the Daisenberger play.
4. Statements from Catholic, Protestant and Jewish circles as well as the mass media have warned the community against a return to Daisenberger. In the interest of community solidarity the warnings cannot be overlooked.

continued.....

The membership of Arbeitsgemeinschaft Passion feel an obligation to demand that the Town Council under no circumstances reverse the existing decision to perform Rosner in 1980.

In the event that the Town Council should reverse this decision, we will exercise our democratic rights and will not support an affair which is not convincing and, that in our opinion can only create problems for Oberammergau.

This means we will not participate (take no assignments).

Respectfully,



THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date April 14, 1978
to Marc Tanenbaum
from Bert Gold
subject

If they are going to have any meaning at all, letters from Christian religious leaders to Oberammergau must go out before the end of the week beginning April 17th.

Would you please give this your immediate and fullest attention.



cc. Bill Trosten



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TEMPORARY SERVICES

Elmer L. Winter
Past President

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, NY 10022.

April 11, 1978

Dear Rabbi: **AMERICAN JEWISH**

I can well understand your disappointment at the change in plans in Germany. I know how hard you and Miles worked on this program. It almost sounded too good to be true when it was announced.

Keep fighting the battle! I am sure at some point in time enlightened Germans will reach the right conclusion.

Best wishes,



Elmer L. Winter.

ELW:glh

cc: Miles Jaffe
Bert Gold



T E I L N E H M E R L I S T E

Forum am 19. November 1978 in München

DIE PASSION JESU ALS GEISTLICHES SCHAUSPIEL -
ZU OBERAMMERGAU 1980

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Prof. Dr. Franz M u s n e r , Professor für Biblische
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Podiumsdiskussion

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Dipl.-Ing. Ernst Maria L a n g , München

Dr. Nathan Peter L e v i n s o n , Heidelberg

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F Oberammergau

memorandum

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date February 9, 1978
to Bert Gold
from Marc H. Tanenbaum
subject Meetings in Oberammergau, February 3-5, 1978

In response to requests contained in recent letters from Dr. Alois Fink, editor of the Rosner version of the Oberammergau Passion Play, and Hans Schwaighofer, the director, an AJC delegation consisting of Miles Jaffe, William Trosten, and myself went to Oberammergau for a series of meetings that began on Friday, February 3, and that concluded on Sunday, February 5.

In their confidential letters and notes to us, both Fink and Schwaighofer expressed a growing concern over efforts on the part of "ultra-conservative" forces in Oberammergau to prevent the adoption of the more pro-Jewish Rosner version of the Passion Play in order to return to the earlier anti-Semitic Daisenberger script. Apparently, following the generally positive reactions to the August 1977 preview of the Rosner version that was expressed by the audiences and in the German and overseas press, Fink, Schwaighofer, Helmut Fischer and their colleagues took for granted that the Oberammergau Town Council and villagers supported the adoption of the Rosner text as the basis for the 1980 production.

In their euphoria, they seemingly had not realized that the pro-Daisenberger forces (which included not only traditionalists but unregenerate Nazis and anti-Semites) refused to give up the ghost and set about systematically organizing the villagers to defeat the Rosner version.

Ernst Zwink, the Burgomeister, was apparently the chief organizer of the pro-Daisenberger forces. He and his associates had recently conducted a "public opinion survey" of the villagers and announced that 60 versus 40 percent of the townspeople favored returning to Daisenberger. Both Fink and Schwaighofer disputed the validity of the survey, and reported that Zwink refused to show them the polling data.

While the Oberammergau Town Council had earlier voted 11 to 6 in favor of the Rosner text, Fink and Schwaighofer had now become quite concerned that the pro-Daisenberger forces led by Zwink were gaining strength and if left uncontested might well defeat the Rosner script during the March 5th election.

They invited our AJC delegation to make a special trip at this time as a means of dramatizing to the Zwink-pro-Daisenberger forces that "the outside world" was watching what was going on in Oberammergau, and that there would be consequences in response to their actions. The pro-Rosner leaders were strongly supported by Lufthansa Airlines, especially in the person of Karl Koepcke, public relations director and a good friend of Bill Trosten's. From our August visit, we were also aware that some officials in the West German Government and in the Bavarian Tourist Ministry also informed Oberammergau authorities that they favored the Rosner version.

While in August we met mainly with the pro-Rosner group and had a remarkably constructive dialogue (see my last Oberammergau memo, August 25, 1977), we decided now to meet with "the opposition." On Friday afternoon, we had lunch with Burgomeister Zwink at the Alois Lang Inn in Oberammergau. Interestingly, he brought his own English interpreter, even though Koepcke and Trosten are fluent as translators.

Our meeting with Zwink lasted four-and-a-half hours. It should be recorded that Miles Jaffe and Bill Trosten were absolutely superb in their presentation of the issues - cool, disciplined, rational, persuasive. It was a marvelous piece of AJC teamwork at its best.

We informed Zwink that we were not accusing either Oberammergau nor himself of being anti-Semitic; that we did not believe in the corporate guilt of the entire German people; we were not anti-Christian. In fact, we showed him a large collection of Anglo-Jewish press clippings which documented our efforts to interpret the August 1977 Rosner preview affirmatively in the United States and elsewhere.

But we made it clear to Zwink in forceful and unmistakable terms that we regarded the Daisenberger text as "structurally anti-Semitic" and that no cosmetic changes could redeem it of its fundamental anti-Jewish nature. Koepcke pressed the point, in support of our views, that the Daisenberger text would damage Bavaria, German, and Christianity in decisive ways.

When the meeting was over, all of us had the clear impression that we had shaken Zwink pretty strangely.

Later, on Friday and Saturday, we met at great length with Fink, Schwaighofer, and Fischer to discuss strategy. On Sunday morning, we met again to draft a letter to Mayor Zwink as a memorandum setting forth our position. Miles drafted an excellent text (copy of which is attached) and Trosten and Fink translated it into German. While we were working on the texts, Helmut Fischer - who, in addition to

playing Jesus in the 1970 production is also deputy mayor - came in to tell us that Zwink had just called "a special meeting" of the Town Council for next Wednesday, February 8th. Fink, Schwaighofer, and Fischer thought that that might be a positive development, and a direct response to our 4½-hour conversation with Zwink.

Fischer reported that he had been asking for such a meeting of the Town Council for several weeks in order to hold a vote on the Passion Play text, but Zwink kept avoiding summoning the Town Council.

On late Wednesday, February 8th, Schwaighofer telephoned Bill Trosten (in Montreal). The Town Council had met and voted 9 to 6 - in favor of Rosner! Unless some other manipulation develops, the chances appear that the 1980 production will be based on the Rosner script.

Footnote: because Miles, Bill, and I took the time and trouble to travel overseas in order to bolster the Rosner side, the feelings of appreciation for our efforts on the part of the pro-Rosner group became increasingly strong and manifest. On Saturday afternoon, while Miles and I were visiting with Schwaighofer and his wife in their home, I said to Schwaighofer - "Our struggle now must be concentrated on defeating the Daisenberger text and winning a victory for the Rosner script. But once that happens, we will want to talk with you further about making needed additional changes in Rosner which still has some anti-Jewish problems." Schwaighofer responded spontaneously, "We will make whatever changes you request that are within reason and our competence. We will cooperate as fully with you as you have with us!" We drank a schnapps, or several, to that!

MHT:RPR

Enclosure

cc: M. Yarmon
M. Jaffe
W. Trosten
S. Hirsh
Z. Shuster
M. B. Resnikoff
M. Finé
H. Applebaum

bc L Yaron

June 26, 1978

TO: Benjamin Epstein

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: Bertram Gold

DATE: June 26, 1978

RE: Oberammergau

I am writing you this confidential, not for publication, memorandum in order to express my surprise at the statement issued by the ADL dated June 13th relative to "drastic changes" that "will be made" in the Oberammergau Passion Play.

If the press release accurately what transpired between your delegation and the people in Oberammergau, then it would seem evident that the ADL has encouraged Mayor Zwink and his associates to believe that a major Jewish group has for the first time endorsed the Daisenberger Text of the Passion Play, provided that certain "changes" have been made. As I mentioned to you during our telephone conversation on this subject before your group left for Europe, our detailed studies of the Daisenberger text, reinforced by similar studies carried out in 1970 by major Catholic and Protestant New Testament scholars, came to the clearcut conclusion that both theologically and dramaturgically Daisenberger was and is structurally anti-Semitic. No cosmetic changes nor prologues can alter its basic framework.

By stating in your press release that "we were not advocating one over the other," I am afraid that ADL will be placed in a position of perpetuating the Daisenberger version and, in effect, undercutting the supporters of the Rosner version.

Beyond that, that statement places ADL in the same corner with Anton Preisinger and his associates who, according to Der Spiegel, were involved in expulsion of Jews in Oberammergau in the Nazi period.

Ben, I think we ought to sit down and talk over this problem
before it develops into a public controversy.





THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

✓ F Oberammergau

Institute of Human Relations • 165 East 56 Street, New York, N Y 10022 • 212/751-4000 • Cable Wishcom, N Y

F Lamm

May 26, 1978

bc Gold, Trosten, Jaffe, Yaseen

Dr. Hans Lamm
Israelitische Kultusgemeinde
Reichenbachstrasse 27
8000 München 5

My dear Dr. Lamm,

Your letter of May 18th addressed to the American Jewish Committee has been directed to my attention. I thank you very much for your inquiry regarding the NBC-TV "Holocaust" program.

As you may know, I served as the American Jewish consultant to NBC-TV and to the producers, Titus Productions, in the preparation of the script as well as in the dramatization. The enclosed clipping from the B'nai B'rith Messenger will give you some indication of my point of view regarding the impact that "Holocaust" has had in the United States.

With regard to your specific inquiries, I am pleased to send you copies of all the material that the American Jewish Committee prepared in cooperation with the National Council of Churches and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. These study guides were sent to every Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, and Jewish religious and civic leader in the United States.

I would suggest that it would be extremely helpful in preparing German public opinion if similar mailings could take place especially from Catholic and Evangelical Lutheran authorities through their pastors throughout Germany.

It does trouble me to learn from you that the Bavarian Network does not plan to show "Holocaust" in Bavaria. I think that would be a great mistake both morally and politically. I wonder if you might contact Dr. Alois Fink of the Bavarian Cultural Ministry who has been most cooperative with us in relation to Oberammergau. It would be extremely important to show "Holocaust" in Bavaria precisely because of the problem with the Daisenberger text.

RICHARD MAASS President ■ MAYNARD I WISNER Chairman Board of Governors ■ MORTON K BLAUSTEIN Chairman National Executive Council ■ HOWARD I FRIEDMAN Chairman Board of Trustees ■ BERTRAM H GOLD Executive Vice President
GERARD WEINSTOCK Treasurer ■ LEONARD C YASEEN Secretary ■ ROBERT L HOROWITZ Associate Treasurer ■ THEODORE ELIENOFF Chairman Executive Committee ■
Honorary Presidents MORRIS B ABRAM LOUIS CAPLAN IRVING M ENGEL ARTHUR J GOLDBERG PHILIP E HOFFMAN ELMER L WINTER ■ Honorary Vice Presidents NATHAN APPLE JAIN
MRS JACOB BLAUSTEIN JACK A GOLDFARB ANDREW GOODMAN EMERY E KLINEMAN JAMES MARSHALL WILLIAM ROSENWALD ■ MAX M FISHER Honorary Chairman
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ALFRED H MOSES Washington D C ELAINE PETSCHER Westchester MERVIN H RISEMAN New York RICHARD E SHERWOOD Los Angeles SHERMAN H STARR Boston ■

My colleague, Zachariah Shuster, and I have just met to discuss this problem. He plans to be in touch with you shortly after his return to Europe in mid-June. He would like to work with you in helping to prepare public opinion for a positive reception to the "Holocaust" program when it is shown throughout Germany.

If there is any other way in which I can be helpful to you, I hope you will feel free to call on me.

With warmest personal good wishes, I am,

Cordially yours,

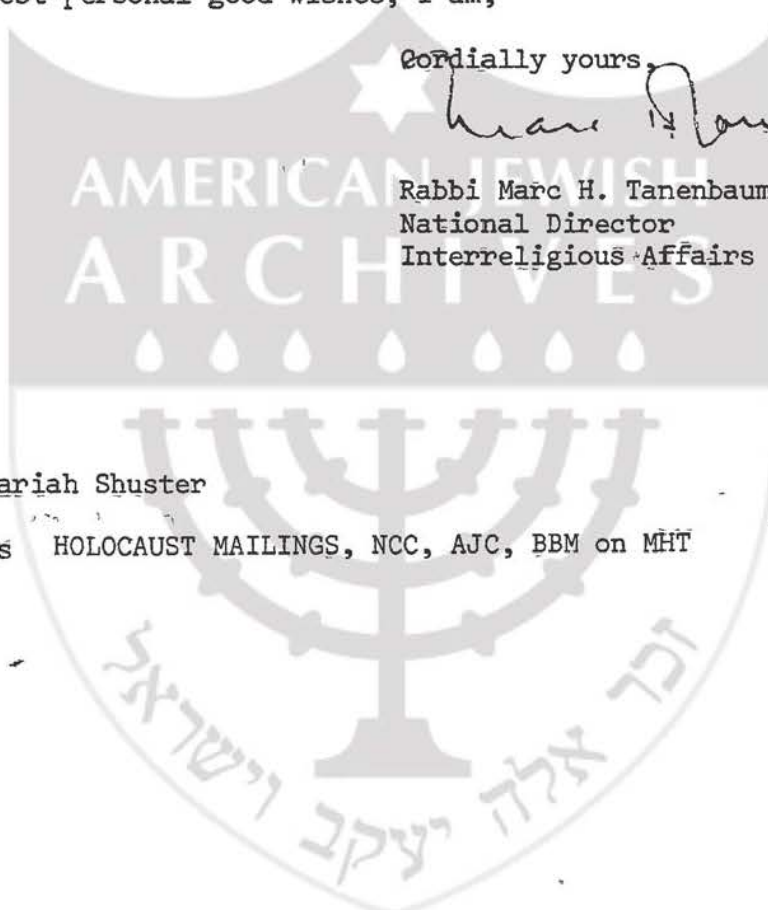


Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
National Director
Interreligious Affairs

MHT.RPR

cc: Zachariah Shuster

Enclosures HOLOCAUST MAILINGS, NCC, AJC, BBM on MHT



ISRAELITISCHE KULTUSGEMEINDE
MÜNCHEN
Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts

on file

Reichenbachstraße 27
8000 München 5 , 18.5.1978
Telefon 26 90 06 - 8 Dr.L/St.

American Jewish Committee
165 E. 56th Street

Ihr Zeichen

New York N.Y. 10022

U.S.A.

Gentlemen,

as you may know, arrangements have been made to show HOLOCAUST TV film in Germany too. However, as DER SPIEGEL related in its issue of May 15th, the Bavarian radio network may not participate in this undertaking, a possibility which I can not verify yet.

However, in my talks with the Bavarian radio network which I plan to conduct not only as president of the Munich Jewish Community but mainly as representative of the Jew of Bavaria in the network's supervisory council (Rundfunkrat), I would like to have as much material on the production and performance of the HOLCAUST film and above all press reports on it as well the public's reaction. Could you kindly send the material to me by airmail as well as the book accompanying the film. Thanks you aver so much.

Faithfully yours,


Dr. Hans Lamm

file

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date Tuesday, March 7, 1978

to See Below

from Marc H. Tanenbaum

subject

The attached horrendous letter from Oberammergau arrived today.

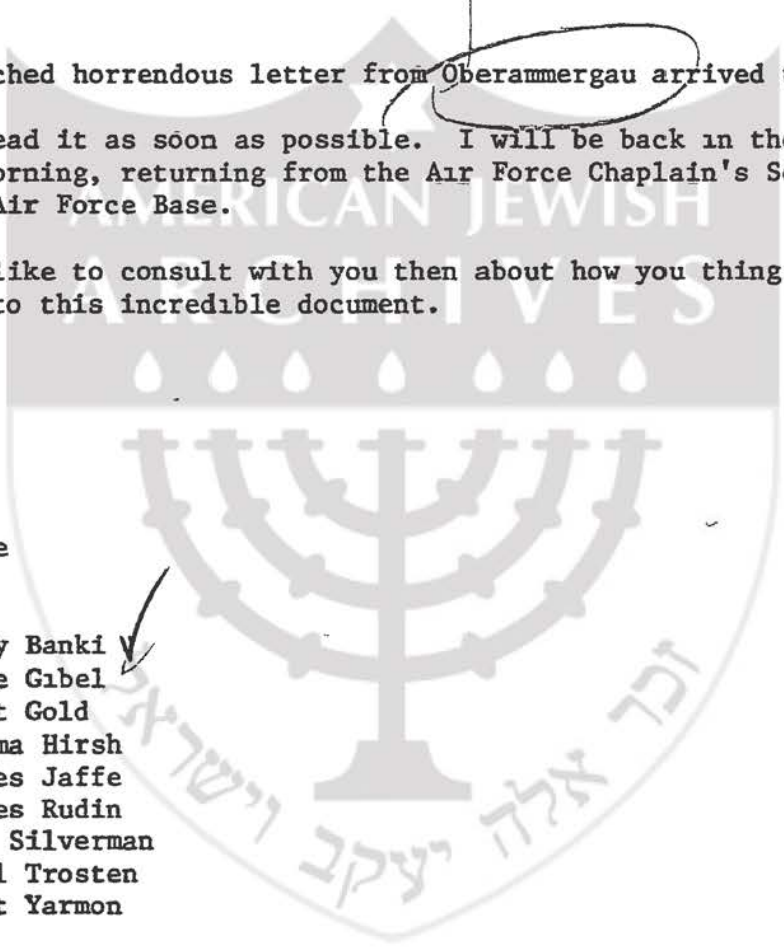
Please read it as soon as possible. I will be back in the office Friday morning, returning from the Air Force Chaplain's School at Maxwell Air Force Base.

I would like to consult with you then about how you think we should respond to this incredible document.

MHT:RPR

Enclosure

- To: Judy Banki ✓
Inge Gibel ✓
Bert Gold
Selma Hirsh
Miles Jaffe
James Rudin
Ira Silverman
Bill Trosten
Mort Yarmon



American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York, N.Y. 10022
U.S.A.
4/2/78

Herrn
Burgermeister
Ernst Zwink
Ettaler-Straße 12
8103 Oberammergau

Mayer

Dear Mr. Zwink,

On our last visit to Oberammergau we regretted that time and circumstances prevented our meeting and talking with more people. On this winter visit, we were pleased to have had the opportunity to speak with you at such length. Your willingness to give us so much of your time and to share your thoughts with us was most appreciated.

The achievement of Oberammergau in its history of production of the Passion Play is the greater because it is the creation of the village. We understand the importance of that fact not only to the village itself but also to the great audience which every ten years looks to you for artistic and religious inspiration.

Our interest and concern stems from an appreciation of one part of that audience, the United States. We also know that the views of that audience are widely shared in other countries. Especially since we have enjoyed your hospitality, experienced the beauty of your village and its mountains, been warmed by the courtesy of your people and witnessed the artist of your Play, we feel we must share with you our concern with the impact your choice between Darsenberger and Krieger will have at home.

American In the last ten years, views of interreligious harmony have moved, in many areas from tolerance to understanding and mutual respect. In that process even theology has changed. Christians have recognized that historic views of the relationship between Jews and the crucifixion of Jesus are not only historically inaccurate but have been responsible for much of the anti-Semitism which has disfigured the Christian image. The decisions of Vatican Council II in this respect have been not only accepted but gratefully welcomed. It has resulted in increased understanding not only between Jews and Protestants, Evangelicals and all of the Christian denominations. We believe that public opinion will no longer tolerate any religious message centered on the theme that Jews as people bear any historic guilt or collective responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus. The mere inferences of such a relationship have been met by universal expressions of outrage. Similarly, the production in Oberammergau of a Passion Play that is seen to carry that message will not be accepted by any responsible segment of public opinion.

Such a production, we believe, will not be met with silence nor with passivity, but with active expressions of public outrage. Such expressions cannot but affect the willingness of Americans and others to view what they should otherwise be eager to see.

But American reaction, we believe, may not merely affect patronage of the Passion Play and the desire to visit Oberammergau. The German experience and achievement in recent years has been much admired and applauded in our country as well as other Western nations. But it is unfortunately true that suspicions and doubts about the depth and duration of democratic values in your country remain. We fear that reaction to your decision will not only directly affect opinion about Oberammergau but will also reflect on Germany as a whole. This may be true even though ~~that~~ German opinion and press have welcomed the possibility of production of the ~~Passion~~ text.

We have read both the Daisenberger and Rosner texts of the Passion Play and have seen your trial production of the Rosner. We cannot express too strongly our conclusion that central to Daisenberger is the theme of collective Jewish guilt of the death of Jesus. We are certain that no deletions, no omissions, no editing, no tricks of stagecraft can disguise that theme. Daisenberger will be seen as an anti-Semitic expression in our country and elsewhere, and will be denounced and scorned as such.

We would oppose any attempt to make your Passion Play anything other than an expression of the artistry and religious convictions of Oberammergau. The fact that it is your creation gives it much of its beauty, power and importance. Because we are dedicated in our opposition to the concept of collective guilt, whether Jews or Bavarian villagers, and because we have come to know you as friends, we hope you will accept our desire simply to inform you of one of the implications of the choice before you. Your right to produce Daisenberger cannot be denied. The certainty and strength of the result of such a choice in America and in other countries cannot be avoided. We hope that for your and ours, your choice will express the warmth and respect which we have felt with you.

Sincerely yours,

Bohr



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, June 13,...."Drastic changes" will be made in the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play to conform with the 1974 Vatican guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations and "reconcile with the Jews...without falsification of the Bible."

The announcement, made in an Oberammergau news release published in two German newspapers -- the Frankfurter Allgemeine-Zeitung (May 13) and the Frankfurter Rundschau (May 31) -- and the Catholic News Service (May 12), credited the changes to recommendations made by a delegation of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith leaders which met with officials of the Bavarian town last month (May 5).

Among the ADL suggestions being followed are: an expanded prologue explicitly stating that the Jews are not to be considered collectively guilty for Jesus' death; revision or elimination of scenes which depict Jews in an unnecessarily harsh way, and the addition of Jews calling for the release of Jesus to the highly emotional scene in which the masses call for his death.

The changes, announced by Hans Maier, a 52-year-old Oberammergau woodcutter who is the newly-elected director of the Passion Play, will be made in the 1980 production. The play, put on for 12 months every

(more)

decade for the past 300 years, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic.

The ADL delegation, led by Nat Kameny, chairman of the national human relations agency's program committee; Rabbi Ronald B. Sobel, vice chairman, and Theodore Freedman, director of the program division, met with Oberammergau Mayor Ernest Zwink, other town leaders, and later in Rome discussed the meetings with members of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews. They were assured by Father Gorges Mejia, secretary of the Commission, that he would give the recommendations made by ADL in Oberammergau to Bishop Carl B. Flugel, Regensburg, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Munich, both in Bavaria.

Mr. Kameny said that Mayor Zwink and other Oberammergau town officials, while knowledgeable about the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," seemed unfamiliar with the 1975 Vatican Guidelines which were adopted to implement it. The Guidelines, following the principles of the Declaration which said "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion...the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or cursed as if this followed from Holy Scripture," encouraged efforts to eliminate anti-Semitic tendencies at every level of Catholic life.

The ADL group made clear to the Oberammergau officials, Mr. Kameny went on to say, that "while we were aware of the current controversy in Oberammergau over two different Passion Play texts, we were not advocating one over the other." The group gave as ADL's concern the impact of all Passion Plays.

(more)

"We pointed out," Mr. Kameny said, "that deletions could be made in whichever text was used to remove segments referring to Jews and Judaism in a prejudicial way and in contradiction to the Vatican's Declaration and Guidelines."

Commending the Oberammergau announcement of change in the prologue and the play itself as "an important breakthrough on a vital issue which has disturbed the American and world Jewish communities for many years," he said "although progress has been slow, it is to be hoped that the new understanding we found in Oberammergau signals a speeding up of the process." ADL will follow through with its promise to Mayor Zwink to send related materials and suggestions for possible additional modifications in the play.

As a result of criticisms in the 1960's, several anti-Semitic references in the Oberammergau Passion Play were dropped or changed when the play was staged in 1970. But Jews, as well as Catholics concerned about anti-Semitism in Catholic thought, literature and culture, did not think the changes went far enough. Oberammergau, like the rest of Bavaria, is predominantly Catholic. The play has always been considered a Catholic religious play, not just a secular dramatic production with a religious theme.

The Anti-Defamation League delegation was in Oberammergau as part of a 14-day international, interreligious seminar in Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The group conferred with Jewish, Christian and political leaders in the three countries on problems related to anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, education about the Holocaust and Jewish-

(more)

Christian relations. At a private audience with Pope Paul VI, ADL leaders presented the Pontiff with the ten millionth copy of the agency's 16-page publication, "The Record - The Holocaust in History -- 1933-1945," which appeared as an insert in 35 major American newspapers and is being used as an educational tool by American public and parochial schools.



BHR, BHFOR, AJ, CP, RE, RTVF, C-78

3/22 M. Tanenbaum
CF 4 I Bill

TRANSLATION

Hans Schwaighofer

Kircheckgasse 12
8103 Oberammergau
March 16, 1978

Dear Mr. Trosten:

The outcome of the Oberammergau communal elections ~~greatly~~ has greatly ~~xxxxxx~~ disturbed us champions of a reformed Passion Play.

The Citizens' Initiative in Oberammergau did not miss a trick in defaming us, insulting us and casting ~~doubt~~ ~~x~~ on the reform ^{in doubt}.

The letter from this group to Rabbi Tanenbaum clearly shows the style in which it operated.

Our people, especially Dr. Fischer and I, regret this arrogance and lack of tact. We would like to ~~xxxxxx~~ apologize on behalf of those gentlemen.

#

(He has stated)

Mr. Zwink was reelected by a large majority. ^{(In the media, in leaflets and in the Second German TV Network, ~~he has stated~~ that ~~xxxxxx~~ at one of the first sessions of the new communal council he intends to nullify the previous decision to perform the Rosner version in 1980, in favor of the version used to date (the Daisenberger-Dedler version) ~~used to date~~.}

The new communal council commands a majority of 12 votes over 5. It takes office on May 1, 1978. Given this majority, it seems hardly likely that the ship can be ~~xxxx~~ turned around without additional help.

#

~~In~~ The press was unable to react appreciably to the New York press conference, because the printers' strike still continues. However, radio and TV briefly noted it, and also reported the results of the Oberammergau election.

A week ago, at a press conference in Munich, Cardinal Ratzinger ~~commented~~ commented on the Oberammergau Passion Play controversy (press reports of March 8, 1978).

If the ~~text~~ Daisenberger text is retained, ~~he~~ he ~~expects~~ expects at the very least that ~~it~~ it be corrected in accordance ^{with} the statements of the Second Vatican Council.

~~Beyond~~ Beyond this, the Church has no legal ~~basis~~ basis for intervention, since the Passion Play is presented by the ~~Oberammergau~~ Oberammergau community.

However, Ratzinger announced conversations with those concerned, including the Jewish side.

To this end, Regional Bishop Schwarzenböck, among others, will go to Oberammergau. "We cannot do much more than that."

~~No~~ ^{set} No date has been ~~set~~ and no invitation has been forthcoming up to now. We hope, however, that something will happen soon.

Despite the ^{momentary} ~~present~~ defeat at the polls, the champions of reform have not given up. ~~Efforts are being made~~

~~Efforts are being made~~ Efforts are afoot on our side, especially among the actors, to give no support to a Daisenberger performance in 1980, ^{and} ~~to~~ to take on no functions in such an undertaking. We hope this will succeed. To this end, we have set up a "Passion Play Working Group," which will seek to put through a reform despite all ~~the~~ obstacles and look after related interests.

#

~~If~~ ^{replied} If the Jewish Committee were to ~~reply~~ to the letter from

the Citizens' Initiative, it certainly would be helpful to us if ~~the Committee (2) further~~ the reply were to specify once more, unmistakably, what further steps would be taken if the Oberammergau Community ~~would~~ should definitively reject reform for 1980. Also, it would be well to resubmit to the community the analysis, ~~of the 1960 and 1970 texts~~ prepared by Jewish and Catholic groups, of the 1960 and 1970 texts. (I suggest that you direct all communications to the Communal Council of Oberammergau [Gemeinderat von Oberammergau], lest Mayor Zwink ~~misinterpret~~ interpret them as personal letters.) If you write, we request that you send us a copy for further clarification and possibly for publication in the press.

We have hopes that despite this lost battle the war is not lost.

Dr. Fischer and I wish you, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum and Mr. Miles Jaffe a happy Easter.*

With kindest regards,

Sincerely yours,

(S) Hans Schwaighofer

* "Easter" in the sense of "Passover" is a colloquial ~~common~~ locution (and no insensitivity implied) among German non-Jews; no slight is intended. --Translator's Note

TRANSLATION by George Salomon

Citizen's Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play

Theaterstrasse 8
8103 Oberammergau
February 25, 1978

OPEN LETTER

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
New York
New York 10022

Dear Mr. Tanenbaum

We are glad that you desire friendly relations with our community. During the years of the Third Reich, this very community aided many Jews, so friendly relations should be a matter of course.

You will therefore surely understand that we must reject any meddling in the internal affairs of the village. Of course we are willing to listen to criticism, but it must be grounded in fact and must take realities into account. We realize that you cannot judge correctly, since you have never viewed the Daisenberger-Dedler Passion. Over the last 128 years, millions of people have departed from this spectacle with deep emotion. We cannot imagine that your impression would be different.

You believe the Daisenberger-Dedler Passion to be anti-Semitic. Unfortunately, just like Mr. Schwaighofer and Dr. Fischer here in town, you fail to specify details and reasons; but criticism must be based on reasons. As you know, the Daisenberger-Dedler version is being revised for 1980; specifically, it is being shortened somewhat and examined for passages that might convey an impression of anti-Semitism, although such is not really the case. In this connection we do wish to hear Jewish arguments and points of criticism. Since you have a copy of the Daisenberger text, we would be grateful if you could let us have your points of criticism regarding this text by the beginning of May. We can consider criticisms that are submitted to us. It would be in our mutual interest if you were to accept this offer of cooperation; because otherwise we would have to explain to the world press that Jewish quarters declined to help with the version preferred by Oberammergau. You surely will not wish to have it said that your organization is trying to dictate to Oberammergau which play is to be performed. We assume that you are no less democratic than your American fellow-citizens.

Since you have never seen the Daisenberger play, you cannot have understood it correctly. In our Daisenberger play, which is preferred by a large majority of the population, the Jews opposed to Christ act out of inner conviction, out of their faith. It is different in the Rosner version; there they are represented as tools of evil.* You will permit us to ask whether it is good for Jewry when only evil spirits can influence

*The original German is ambiguous here; the phrase can also mean "tools of the Evil One." -- Translator's note.

the Jews, as in the Rosner play...

Like millions of believing Christians, we are of the opinion that the collective guilt of the Jews is not, indeed, cannot be, the issue in our Passion. It is, after all, the greatest distinction of the Jewish people that Christ arose from it. Thus, we do not understand why Jewish organizations oppose Passion plays, when their people gains distinction from them.

You will surely understand our indignation about your boycott threat in the name of the American people and of "the world's citizens," and about you questioning of the democratic character of our country. Hundreds of thousands of your American fellow citizens have been deeply moved by Oberammergau, whereas you represent only one American minority, albeit an influential one, of whose opinions we take notice. But you do not represent America, let alone other countries. Nor can we acquiesce in your doubting our country's democratic character. Our country is one of the most democratic in the world -- though it is true that democracy is put in doubt when a communal council acts contrary to the clear will of a majority of the population, as happened in our village a few weeks before the March 5 election.

We find it interesting that you do not utter a single word to say that a Rosner Passion, if any, would not be boycotted by your organization. According to various statements by some Jewish organizations, Passion plays ought to be done away with as a matter of principle.

We will be glad to cooperate with you, but only on an appropriate basis. The final and decisive word lies with Oberammergau and its citizens.

Sincerely yours,

Citizen's Initiative for the 1980 Passion Play

Melchior Breitsamter, Sen.
Chairman

Anton Presinger, Sen.
Deputy Chairman

Willi Eich
Deputy Chairman

Werner Nötz
Press Spokesman

Hans Maier
Associate

Willi Stückl
Treasurer

Alois Maderspacher
Associate

GS:RPR

3/7/78

O f f e n e r B r i e f
=====

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56th Street
NEW YORK
N.Y. 10022

Sehr geehrter Herr Tanenbaum,

wir freuen uns, wenn Sie mit unserer Gemeinde freundschaftliche Beziehungen wünschen. Gerade unsere Gemeinde hat in den Jahren des "Dritten Reiches" vielen Juden geholfen, so daß freundschaftliche Beziehungen selbstverständlich waren.

Sie werden deshalb sicher Verständnis haben, wenn wir aber jede Einmischung in die inneren Angelegenheiten des Dorfes ablehnen müssen. Selbstverständlich sind wir für Kritik offen; diese muß aber sachlich fundiert sein und die wahren Gegebenheiten berücksichtigen. Wir haben allerdings Verständnis dafür, daß Sie nicht richtig urteilen können, da Sie noch nie eine DAISENBERGER/DEDLER-Passion gesehen haben. Millionen Menschen haben diese in den vergangenen 128 Jahren tief bewegt verlassen. Wir können uns nicht vorstellen, daß Sie einen anderen Eindruck haben wurden.

Sie meinen, die DAISENBERGER/DEDLER-Passion wurde antisemitisch sein. Leider führen Sie genauso wenig wie hier die Herren Schwaighofer und Dr. Fischer Einzelheiten und Begründungen an; Kritik muß aber begründet sein. Wie Sie wissen, wird im Hinblick auf 1980 DAISENBERGER/DEDLER überarbeitet, insbesondere etwas gekürzt und auf Stellen hin untersucht, die den Eindruck des Antisemitismus erwecken könnten, obwohl dies in Wahrheit nicht zutrifft. Wir wünschen dabei auch die jüdischen Vorstellungen und Kritikpunkte zu hören. Nachdem Sie ja im Besitze eines Daisenberger-Textes sind, waren wir Ihnen dankbar, wenn Sie uns bis Anfang Mai Ihre Kritikpunkte anhand des Textes mitteilen würden. Wir können Kritik berücksichtigen, die uns mitgeteilt wird. Es wäre im beiderseitigen Interesse, wenn Sie das Angebot zur

Zusammenarbeit annehmen, da wir ansonsten gegenüber der Weltpresse klarstellen müßten, daß es die jüdischen Kreise ablehnen, an der VON OBERAMMERGAU GEWÜNSCHTEN FASSUNG mitzuarbeiten. Sie werden sich sicherlich nicht nachsagen lassen wollen, daß Ihre Organisation Oberammergau diktieren will, welches Spiel gespielt wird. Wir gehen davon aus, daß Sie genauso Demokrat wie Ihre amerikanischen Mitbürger sind.

Da Sie noch nie das DAISENBERGER-SPIEL gesehen haben, können Sie es auch nicht richtig verstanden haben. In unserem, von der überwiegenden Mehrheit der Bevölkerung gewünschten DAISENBERGER-SPIEL handeln die Juden, die gegen Christus sind, aus innerer Überzeugung, aus ihrem Glauben. Anders dagegen in der Rosner-Passion: dort werden sie als Werkzeuge des Bösen dargestellt. Sie erlauben dabei wohl die Frage, ob es für das Judentum gut ist, wenn wie im Rosner-Spiel nur die bösen Geister auf die Juden Einfluß nehmen können....

Wir sind - wie viele Millionen gläubige Christen - der Auffassung, daß es in unserer Passion nicht um die Kollektivschuld der Juden geht, ja gar nicht gehen kann. Schließlich ist es die größte Auszeichnung für das jüdische Volk, daß Christus aus ihm hervorgegangen ist. Wir verstehen deshalb nicht, warum jüdische Organisationen gegen Passionsspiele sind, obwohl ihr Volk doch dadurch ausgezeichnet wird.

Sie werden sicherlich unsere Empörung verstehen, wenn Sie im Namen des amerikanischen Volkes und der "Weltbürger" mit Boykott drohen und an der Demokratie in unserem Lande Zweifel hegen. Hunderttausende Ihrer amerikanischen Mitbürger sind tief bewegt in Oberammergau gewesen, während Sie nur eine - wenn auch einflußreiche - amerikanische Minderheit vertreten, deren Meinung wir zur Kenntnis nehmen. Aber Amerika oder gar noch andere Länder vertreten Sie nicht. Wir können auch nicht hinnehmen, wenn Sie die Demokratie in unserem Lande anzweifeln. Unser Land ist eines der demokratischsten in der Welt. Die Demokratie wird allerdings in Frage gestellt, wenn ein Gemeinderat gegen den eindeutigen Mehrheitswillen der Bevölkerung handelt, so wie es in unserem Dorf wenige Wochen vor der Neuwahl am 5. März geschehen ist.

Interessant ist aber auch, daß Sie mit keinem Wort erwähnen, daß eine eventuelle Rosner-Passion von Ihrer Organisation nicht boykot-

tiert werden würde. Nach verschiedenen Äußerungen jüdischer Organisationen sollen ja Passionsspiele grundsätzlich abgeschafft werden.

Wir sind gerne zur Zusammenarbeit mit Ihnen bereit, aber nur auf einer angemessenen Basis. Das letzte und entscheidende Wort hat Oberammergau und seine Bürger.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

BURGERINITIATIVE PASSIONSSPIELE 1980

Breitsamter Melchior sen.
Melchior Breitsamter sen.
Vorsitzender

Anton Preisinger sen.
Anton Preisinger sen.
stellv. Vorsitzender

Willi Eich
Willi Eich
stellv. Vorsitzender

W. Notz
Werner Notz
Pressesprecher

Hans Maier
Hans Maier
Beisitzer

Willi Stuckl
Willi Stuckl
Kassier

Alois Maderspacher
Alois Maderspacher
Beisitzer

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date June 15, 1978
to James Rudin
from Brant Coopersmith
subject John Steinbruck -- Oberammergau

Enclosed is a copy of a note from Sol Bernards to John Steinbruck, indicating a positive response to Steinbruck's suggestion that there be an Inter-faith Vigil take place at Oberammergau.

This morning while talking to Gene Fisher on another subject, he told me about the ADL release and expressed doubts that the play could be edited sufficiently as to make it acceptable. At that point I mentioned Steinbruck's idea and suggested that a Christian demonstration of some kind might be useful. He was very positive in his response. I have not talked to John in any detail in view of his suggesting this to you at the Annual Meeting -- I think. However, in my conversation with Gene Fisher, I suggested that a small delegation from the U.S. being joined by similar groups from other European countries plus some German Catholics standing vigil at Oberammergau at some appropriate time after a formal call on the Ordinary of the Diocese would make a very effective witness.

My contribution to this discussion is the suggestion that an international Catholic action would be more impressive than a tri-faith American action. In any event Sol Bernards has already responded to John so it is entirely possible that something will happen one way or another.

Regards, ---



BC:dw

cc: M. Tanenbaum
 H. Applebaum
 M. Friedman

P.S. Note the other enclosure from Steve Hitchcock to John...

encls. 2

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

315 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016

Prant

6/9/78 MU9-7400

To Dear John (Heimbrub)

Thanks for your letter
of May 30 - As to Obermayer,
there has been some progress
as a result of diverse
pressures -

Theodore Freedman, our
National Program Director,
and Dr. Lawrence Lubnick,
our European Affairs Director,

Rabbi Solomon S Bernards

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH
315 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10016

2

MU9-7400

To meet the Overseas
people recently while on a
European visit

I'm going to show your
letter with these two
colleagues and have them
react to your suggestion
(which I think is great)
for a tri-furc post in
protest — See the best

cc: Ted Freedman
L. Desnick
Arnold Forster

sol

Rabbi Solomon S Bernards

Our 65th Year

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE OF B'NAI B'RITH

315 LEXINGTON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N Y 10016, TEL 689-7400

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THEODORE FREEDMAN

June 14, 1978

Rev. John F. Steinbruck
Pastor, Luther Place Memorial Church
1226 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Rev. Steinbruck:

In response to your letter of May 30 regarding Oberammergau, as Sol Bernards indicated we met with the leadership of the Oberammergau community to discuss with them the problems related to the Passion Play. You probably are aware that there is a current controversy in Oberammergau over two different Passion Play texts. We had indicated to the Mayor and to others in that community that we were not advocating one play or text over another but rather our concern regarding the impact of all Passion Plays.

I'm taking the liberty of enclosing a copy of the release that we prepared which fairly well and yet briefly highlights the results of our visit to Oberammergau. Should you need additional information, I would be more than happy to provide you with a much more detailed memorandum that I prepared for internal use. Regarding the proposed Lutheran-Catholic action-appeal that you describe in your letter, I see nothing wrong with your doing so. I would suggest however that it is important for Lutheran and Catholic organizations and church hierarchy to communicate to the leadership of Oberammergau the need for meaningful changes in the script. I would make one final suggestion and that is not to get trapped into the controversy of the right script or the wrong script. Neither one is pristine pure and Jews would have to object to either of the scripts.

I do appreciate your interest in this matter and would welcome the opportunity of discussing this problem with you in greater detail.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,


Theodore Freedman
TF mef
enc

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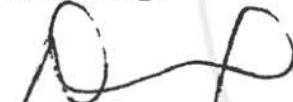
Mr. William Trosten
American Jewish Committee
165 East 56 Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Bill:

Hy Haves (the person that interviewed us last Friday) sent me the enclosed in the mail. I think you will find it most interesting and revealing.

See you in New York on the 12th.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Weiss

RLW:sp

xc: Miles Jaffe, Esq. (w/enclosure)
Rabbi Marc Tannenbaum (w/enclosure)
Dr. Neil C. Sandberg (w/enclosure)

ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE

OF B'NAI B'RITH

315 Lexington Avenue
New York, N Y 10016

MEMORANDUM

To: Burton Joseph
From: Ted Freedman and Nat Kameny
Date: June 13, 1978
Subject: Oberammergau Passion Play

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

National Commission
National Program Committee

BENJAMIN R. EPSTEIN

This report will outline the background of the problem and to provide a resume of our meetings and discussions in Munich, Oberammergau and Rome.

Background

Ever since Medieval times, Christians have been putting on "passion plays" -- in Churches, outdoor arenas, seminaries and public halls -- about the Crucifixion and Resurrection of Christ. These passion plays generally are simplistic, distorted and vilify the Jews.

Oberammergau, the village in the Bavarian German Alps, is famous for its Passion Play which has become a major tourist attraction and drew some 500,000 persons from 113 countries in 1970 alone. Almost all of the 5,000 villagers of Oberammergau take part in the Passion Play which is staged during a 3-month period and has become Oberammergau's main industry and livelihood. The Oberammergau play has been presented every ten years since 1634 when it first was performed to fulfill a vow made during an epidemic of a plague. In the more than three centuries since, at least five different versions have been used.

For years the play has been criticized by many Bible scholars and theologians, both Jewish and Christian, as falsifying fact and doctrine by blaming Jews collectively for the crucifixion of Jesus. The present text has been a major issue in recent years with Jewish organizations demanding its revision and some even threatening sanctions against Oberammergau and the play if it is not changed.

A version by Father Ferdinand Rosner, a Benedictine priest, was used in 1750 and 1760. The Rosner text was replaced in 1860 by the Daisenberger version which is viewed by most knowledgeable observers as anti-Jewish.

In the version of the Passion Play written in 1860 by a local parish priest, Father Josef Daisenberger, the Jews are shown as the personification of death, hate, envy and avarice. Daisenberger also makes the Jews collectively responsible for the crucifixion and presents a false picture of the role of Pontius Pilate. In the Rosner version, as edited by Dr. Alois Fink, the sins are represented by allegorical figures wearing, and then carrying, appropriate masks. Moreover, the modified Rosner text suggests that not all the Jews voted against Jesus; the scene of the money changers is not shown; and the character of Pontius Pilate is based on modern historical theory.

(over)

The first steps toward changing the text were taken in 1960 when the then mayor, Raimund Lang, set up a commission of specialists in history, literature and theology to study practical possibilities. One of the members was Professor Carl Orff who suggested that the village revert to the Rosner 1750 text, but in a shortened and partially rewritten form.

The proposed change in text set up a controversy between the reformers and the old guard which became a key local election issue this spring. Prior to this a special text performance of the new version was given for the press in August 1977 on the 15th, 17th, 19th and 21st, and for the Oberammergau villagers on August 13. On February 8, 1978, by a vote of 9 to 6 with two abstentions, the Oberammergau City Council decided to use the 1750 text written by Father Rosner, rather than the script written by Father Daisenberger. Following a heated controversy in Oberammergau the presidents of the Oberammergau City Council voted against any reform in the Passion Play and agreed to maintain the more traditional Daisenberger text.

Dr. Alois Fink of Radio Bavaria was intimately involved in the preparation of a modified Rosner text to be substituted for the Daisenberger text. Dr. Fink claims that Rosner was not anti-Semitic but rather "he saw the Jewish people as representing mankind, torn between heaven and hell."

Heading the reform movement backing the use of the Rosner text is a wood-carver, Hans Schwaighofer, who was supported by the then deputy mayor, Helmut Fischer. Supporters for the Daisenberger text were the local mayor, Ernst Zwink, regarded as a cautious politician rather than a fanatic on the issue, and Anton Preisinger, the producer.

It is with this background that ADL's International Interreligious Seminar made the decision that on its visit to the Munich area it would seek appointments with Mayor Zwink, Anton Preisinger, who is currently the producer of the Daisenberger version of the Passion Play, and Hans Schwaighofer. In addition, it was decided that discussions would be held with Catholic leadership in Munich in advance of our visit to Oberammergau to secure as much background information as possible.

Dr. Alois Fink, Radio Bavaria

The Seminar group met with Dr. Fink at Katholischen Akademie (Catholic Academy) in Munich. Dr. Fink made a comprehensive presentation of the subject, providing a general overview of the origin of the play from the earliest versions that were performed in 1615 in various places throughout Europe and the Rosner version of the play in Oberammergau in 1750. Dr. Fink is an avid supporter of the Rosner script and describes it as representing the zenith of Southern German Baroque literature. Dr. Fink states quite emphatically that the Daisenberger version is justifiably accused of showing inclinations toward anti-Semitism. He indicates that in a purely literal manner, anti-Semitism also occurs here and there in Rosner's text as in any passion play but it does not form the base for the entire dramatic structure of the play, whereas the Daisenberger version adapts the driving of the merchants from the Temple into the main motif for the persecution of Jesus. Dr. Fink argues that the Rosner version presents

"the Jews" far more discriminatingly and shows that Jesus' adversaries present arguments and are dignified in the advocacy of their tradition, and that Jesus' real antagonists are Satan and vice. Dr. Fink expresses some puzzlement as to why the leaders of Oberammergau, using increasingly dubious means, especially after what he describes as the success of the trial run version of the Rosner script, wish to prevent the people of Oberammergau from becoming familiar with the play and allowing them to make the decision as to the suitability. He states that the arguments based around the Oberammergau Passion Play became the main topic of the local election and that emotions were permitted to override fact. He claimed that two arguments were put forward against the accusations of anti-Semitism: "the gospel" naturally cannot be changed and, thirty years after the Hitler era one should be able to gradually approach the "Jewish question" again "with less prejudice."

He describes the village of Oberammergau as a split and hostile community more so than at any time in its history. He states that there are economic factors involved in the decision not to change and that the claim of maintaining tradition is readily used to oppose any outside interference, thereby preserving what Oberammergau people believe to be an important Christian and Bavarian cultural treasure.

Dr. Fink indicated he was asked to examine the Daisenberger text to see if revisions could be made to make it acceptable. After extensive study on his part he came to the conclusion that it was impossible to make the necessary modification without drastically revising the text so that it would no longer be the Daisenberger text. In effect a new Passion Play text would have to be prepared. He argues that the Rosner text is in fact the best text available and relatively free of the kind of anti-Semitism expressed in the text to be used by Oberammergau in 1980.

There were many nuances in Dr. Fink's remarks which not only were in his prepared presentation but also in extended informal conversation that he had with the Seminar group. He believed that concerted pressure was needed to try to force the city leadership to effect the change in substituting the present text for the Rosner one. He further indicated because of the controversy many of the first class actors who normally would be involved in the play have refused to participate, and it was necessary for the current producer to seek second and third line actors to assume some of the parts. He even speculated that it would not be unrealistic to anticipate that there will be a delay in the town being able to put on the play in 1980 as scheduled. That is not to say that the play would not be performed but that the starting date might very well be delayed.

Dr. Fink was questioned extensively as to possible options, all of which he felt had merit but that the major thrust of any effort should be the substitution of the Rosner text for the Daisenberger text. It was in this light that Dr. Fink was asked if a new and more extensive prologue to the play, both spoken and written, might not be an additional item in order to lessen the anti-Semitic impact of the Passion Play. He responded that this suggestion had some merit, but again stated in the interest of the overall objective, whatever pressure should be applied should be in the direction of a change to the Rosner text.

(over)

With this as a general background the Seminar group met privately to strategize as to possible approaches for our meetings in Oberammergau. It was agreed that a small group would meet with the mayor at the same time that another group would be meeting with Hans Schwaighofer, the leader of the reform movement and former producer under the Rosner trial text, and that the entire group would meet with the producer of the Daisenberger play, Anton Preisinger.

Mayor Ernst Zwink

Since the town is split on this issue, it was the group's judgment that to go in to see Mayor Zwink on the issue of the text -- Rosner vs. Daisenberger -- would simply maintain the polarization. We agreed to talk in a general way about changes which would deemphasize those aspects of the performance that focus negatively on the Jews, and to press for their making such modifications. At the same time, since the question of a prologue was not at issue, it was agreed we would suggest consideration of a revised prologue which would be more in keeping with Vatican II and the Vatican Guidelines which are much more extensive on the subject and which were formulated in 1975.

On Friday, May 5, we motored to Oberammergau and a small group of four persons -- Nat Kameny, Ted Freedman, Joseph Lichten and Larry Leshnik -- met with the mayor, Ernst Zwink, in the Oberammergau City Hall. We were ushered into the boardroom of the City Hall. The mayor came in and sat at the head of the large table and formally started the proceedings. We soon realized the mayor was warily perceiving us to be -- that is the ADL delegation -- a part of all prior delegations and obviously made the assumption that we were seeking the same objectives. We made it a point to indicate to him that we were concerned not with the specific text used, around which there had been such controversy, but with the impact of the performance of the Passion Play. He was quick to point out that there was no intent to be anti-Semitic and that this in a sense was a replication of the Gospel. In turn, we explained that we felt the play was not in the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines and that while his intent was not to be anti-Semitic, nor did we believe him to be anti-Semitic, the result was in fact contrary to their intent.

We suggested that in our judgment changes could be made, and some modification of the manner in which certain aspects of the play were presented could, in effect, avoid the anti-Jewish implications that flowed from it of Jewish culpability in the deicide. While the mayor defended the play and dramatic license he appeared not unmindful of the problem and possibilities that we tried to convey to him. We further noted that there were aspects of theatrical performances that one would find in any play under one producer versus another, in which certain items are not highlighted in quite the same way without in any way losing the dramatic appeal of the production. While he did not state categorically that he could make these changes he did indicate quite clearly that he was prepared to accept our views, which he appreciated, and that he would discuss them with the producers in an effort to see what modifications might be made. We also proposed that in addition to such modifications as might be made, consideration be given to an enlarged prologue, inasmuch as a prologue now exists, by extending it both in the spoken and written form. It could be helpful in minimizing if not avoiding some of the misunderstanding and anti-Jewish feelings. We further indicated

that we had a sample text prepared by a theologian for his consideration and that of his colleagues in the town council, which we felt was more in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines. He accepted the copy of the proposed prologue and indicated that he would share it with others in the town council. The meeting was concluded on a friendly note, and I think it would be fair to say with guarded optimism that the reception of our committee was positive. While it would be unrealistic to assume that major changes will be forthcoming it would also be incorrect to believe that no modifications or changes will occur as a result of this meeting. It certainly enables ADL to maintain contact with Mayor Zwink and to offer concrete proposals regarding modifications in the production.

The Reformers

The group then met with Hans Schwaighofer and Hans Lang, both principals in the reform movement. Schwaighofer while professionally a woodcutter also was responsible for the trial performance of the Rosner text production of the Passion Play which had been rejected by the town council.

Their view was that the community, while extremely conservative and tied to "tradition," is not consciously anti-Semitic. They point out that there are some people in Oberammergau who do realize that the play conveys a stereotypic presentation of the Jews. They also noted that while the Roman Catholic Church in Bavaria has indicated that the play must be in conformity with Vatican II, nothing much has happened to produce these results. Schwaighofer noted in particular that the problems related to the play were largely in two categories, one described as tradition and the other, which he describes as laziness. He stated that one major force in the resistance to change is that the older people had gone to great pains to learn parts and there was a major reluctance to change scripts and accordingly have to learn new parts, and that for many of them it would be difficult if not impossible. Schwaighofer and Lang are closely allied with Alois Fink in Munich and support the Rosner text. During the course of discussion we raised the question about the possibility of a further revision of the text, in effect producing a new Passion Play which Schwaighofer felt would be unthinkable as would be, in his opinion at the present, any major changes in the Daisenberger text. Speaking of the latter text, Schwaighofer indicated that the text is so saturated with anti-Semitism that changes would not really modify the negative impact of the play. He thought that the concept of an extended prologue or epilogue would be a useful thing, but that the major effort needed was to secure a change from the Daisenberger text to the Rosner text.

Both Schwaighofer and Lang expressed the view that they had gotten no assistance from Cardinal Ratzinger in Munich, and reported that all of their communications to the Cardinal on this subject have remained unanswered. It was also their view that it might not be unlikely that their requests for assistance have never been placed before him. They felt strongly that if the church took a firm stand on the issue important changes could be brought about. When we advised them that Seminar members would be meeting with Vatican officials, they urged us to raise this problem with them and to solicit their assistance.

(over)

Anton Preisinger, the Producer

A small group from the Seminar met with Anton Preisinger and Herr Noth. Mr. Preisinger was animated and outspoken assuring the group that there was no intent to perpetuate anti-Semitism and that if our group could show him where the script contained any anti-Semitism he would make changes in the production. When questions were raised as to script changes and possible production changes he responded by stating, to make major changes would be like asking them to produce "Flying Down to Rio." In any case he did indicate a willingness to be open to new materials and possible script changes, as well as to examine the proposed prologue materials left with the mayor. Our group promised to send him as quickly as possible a critique of the specific aspects of the script which we believe to be anti-Semitic and not in keeping with the spirit of Vatican II and the Guidelines.

Vatican Secretariat on Relations With The Jews

On Wednesday, May 10, in Rome, our group met with Monsignor Moeller and Father Jorge Mejia to discuss a wide range of concerns including a brief report on our trip at which time the subject of Oberammergau and the Passion Play was raised. Both Father Mejia and Monsignor Moeller expressed surprise over our concern with the play indicating that the last they had been informed was that there had been a text change and that the problem had been resolved. We detailed for them that in fact changes had not been made and that those who were leaders of the movement for change felt abandoned by the church. Father Mejia stated that it was ADL's responsibility to provide him with as much information as possible on our meeting with the people in Oberammergau and that Vatican II and the Guidelines (promulgated in 1975) stated quite clearly that Jews were not to be treated as a rejected people or a decide people, and the play violated these principles.

Father Mejia indicated that Bishop Flugel of Regensburg, Bavaria, who is a member of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews and is close to Bavarian officials, should be involved in this particular problem. Father Mejia also indicated that he works closely with Cardinal Ratzinger and that he would have occasion to discuss this problem with him. As we concluded this portion of our discussion Father Mejia requested that we prepare a memorandum for him with background information on the matter with supportive quotations from the various texts and such other materials as we believed appropriate for his follow-up.

Upon our return to the United States, the following National Catholic News Service Release was received. (See attached)

While all of us realize that Passion Plays by their nature carry the roots of anti-Semitism, we can be justifiably proud of what we must recognize as an important breakthrough with the leadership of a community which is, in the eyes of the world, synonymous with Passion Plays. Obviously this represents important progress. Further progress may be slow to develop but we trust this signals a beginning.

TF/NK:am

Attachment

religious communities Vestments, chalices, altar linens Stations of the Cross and other liturgical furnishings costing \$17,270 were provided, and \$151,800 was used to support a variety of local activities in mission areas

The \$4.5 million budget for the fiscal year from March 1, 1978, to Feb. 28, 1979, lists \$1 million earmarked for special diocesan aid, \$900,000 for chapel-catechetical center building, \$600,000 each for mission priest and Religious subsidy campus ministry and mission catechetical and religious education; \$300,000 for missionary seminarian education, \$275,000 for Mass offerings, \$200,000 for miscellaneous aid, and \$25,000 for liturgical furnishings

The Catholic Church Extension Society has been raising funds for home missions since 1905 through individual contributions and through annuities, bequests, burses, life insurance policies, real estate, securities and trust arrangements

10 - 5/12/78

AMERICAN JEWISH

PASSION PLAY WILL HAVE 'DRASTIC CHANGES,' PRODUCER SAYS (510)

OBERAMMERGAU, West Germany (NC) — The new producer of the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play announced May 10 that "drastic changes" will be made in the Daisenberger version of the play

The play, put on for a year every decade in the small Bavarian town of Oberammergau, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic

Hans Maier, 52-year-old woodcutter-producer of the play, said that the 1980 production will be made to conform "as far as possible" with the orientations of the Second Vatican Council regarding Christian-Jewish relations

The announcement came only days after a 16-member delegation of American Jews, officials of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, held talks with Oberammergau leaders

The group called for changes in the script

Maier said that sections in the prologue assigning collective guilt for Jesus' death to the Jews would be cut.

He also promised that a scene in which the temple merchants plot revenge against Jesus for cleansing the temple precincts would be revised

Maier said that he is shortening the play by one hour and designing a new set

The producer added that the team doing the text revisions would include persons who do not reside in Oberammergau, but he did not reveal the names of the group members

For more than three centuries Oberammergauers have staged a Passion Play every tenth year as a result of a vow made during the Thirty Years' War when the village was spared from a plague sweeping Europe.

Over the years different scripts have been used. The Daisenberger version was written for the 1860 production and has been in use since

As a result of criticisms in the 1960s, several anti-Semitic references were dropped or changed when the play was staged in 1970. But Jewish leaders and Catholics concerned about anti-Semitism in Catholic thought, literature and culture argued that the changes did not go far enough

Friday, May 12, 1978

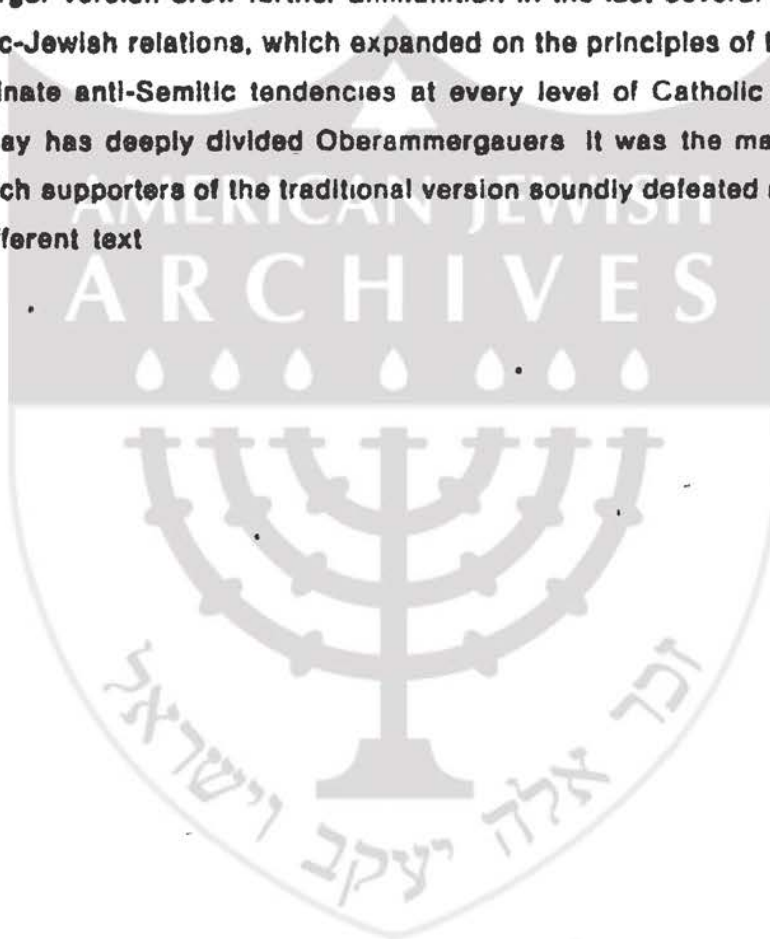
Oberammergau, like the rest of Bavaria, is predominantly Catholic. The play, fulfilling a religious vow, has always been considered a Catholic religious play, not just a secular dramatic production with a religious theme.

In recent years opponents of the play's anti-Semitic tones have focused especially on the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions" to argue against passages in the play which suggest that Jews are responsible for Christ's death.

The council's declaration said that "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion. The Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or accursed as if this followed from holy Scripture."

Critics of the Dalsenberger version drew further ammunition in the last several years from the Vatican's 1974 guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations, which expanded on the principles of the 1965 declaration and encouraged efforts to eliminate anti-Semitic tendencies at every level of Catholic life.

The debate over the play has deeply divided Oberammergauers. It was the main issue in town council elections this spring, in which supporters of the traditional version soundly defeated reformists who wanted to substitute a completely different text.





NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

New York, NY, June 13...."Drastic changes" will be made in the world-famous Oberammergau Passion Play to conform with the 1974 Vatican guidelines for Catholic-Jewish relations and "reconcile with the Jews...without falsification of the Bible."

The announcement, made in an Oberammergau news release published in two German newspapers -- the Frankfurter Allgemeine-Zeitung (May 13) and the Frankfurter Rundschau (May 31) -- and the Catholic News Service (May 12), credited the changes to recommendations made by a delegation of Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith leaders which met with officials of the Bavarian town last month (May 5).

Among the ADL suggestions being followed are: an expanded prologue explicitly stating that the Jews are not to be considered collectively guilty for Jesus' death; revision or elimination of scenes which depict Jews in an unnecessarily harsh way, and the addition of Jews calling for the release of Jesus to the highly emotional scene in which the masses call for his death.

The changes, announced by Hans Maier, a 52-year-old Oberammergau woodcutter who is the newly-elected director of the Passion Play, will be made in the 1980 production. The play, put on for 12 months every

(more)

decade for the past 300 years, has been criticized by Jews and Christians alike as anti-Semitic.

The ADL delegation, led by Nat Kameny, chairman of the national human relations agency's program committee; Rabbi Ronald B. Sobel, vice chairman, and Theodore Freedman, director of the program division, met with Oberammergau Mayor Ernest Zwink, other town leaders, and later in Rome discussed the meetings with members of the Vatican Commission on Relations with the Jews. They were assured by Father Gorges Mejia, secretary of the Commission, that he would give the recommendations made by ADL in Oberammergau to Bishop Carl B. Flugel, Regensburg, and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Munich, both in Bavaria.

Mr. Kameny said that Mayor Zwink and other Oberammergau town officials, while knowledgeable about the Second Vatican Council's 1965 "Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions," seemed unfamiliar with the 1975 Vatican Guidelines which were adopted to implement it. The Guidelines, following the principles of the Declaration which said "neither all Jews indiscriminately at that time, nor Jews today, can be charged with the crimes committed during his (Christ's) passion...the Jews should not be spoken of as rejected or cursed as if this followed from Holy Scripture," encouraged efforts to eliminate anti-Semitic tendencies at every level of Catholic life.

The ADL group made clear to the Oberammergau officials, Mr. Kameny went on to say, that "while we were aware of the current controversy in Oberammergau over two different Passion Play texts, we were not advocating one over the other." The group gave as ADL's concern the impact of all Passion Plays.

"We pointed out," Mr. Kameny said, "that deletions could be made in whichever text was used to remove segments referring to Jews and Judaism in a prejudicial way and in contradiction to the Vatican's Declaration and Guidelines."

Commending the Oberammergau announcement of change in the prologue and the play itself as "an important breakthrough on a vital issue which has disturbed the American and world Jewish communities for many years," he said "although progress has been slow, it is to be hoped that the new understanding we found in Oberammergau signals a speeding up of the process." ADL will follow through with its promise to Mayor Zwink to send related materials and suggestions for possible additional modifications in the play.

As a result of criticisms in the 1960's, several anti-Semitic references in the Oberammergau Passion Play were dropped or changed when the play was staged in 1970. But Jews, as well as Catholics concerned about anti-Semitism in Catholic thought, literature and culture, did not think the changes went far enough. Oberammergau, like the rest of Bavaria, is predominantly Catholic. The play has always been considered a Catholic religious play, not just a secular dramatic production with a religious theme.

The Anti-Defamation League delegation was in Oberammergau as part of a 14-day international, interreligious seminar in Germany, Italy and Switzerland. The group conferred with Jewish, Christian and political leaders in the three countries on problems related to anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism, education about the Holocaust and Jewish-

(more)

Christian relations. At a private audience with Pope Paul VI, ADL leaders presented the Pontiff with the ten millionth copy of the agency's 16-page publication, "The Record - The Holocaust in History -- 1933-1945," which appeared as an insert in 35 major American newspapers and is being used as an educational tool by American public and parochial schools.



BHR, BHFOR, AJ, CP, RE, RTVF, C-78

NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E 56 St., New York, N Y 10022, (212) 751-4000

ANNUAL NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEETING

Oct. 26-29

**Hyatt Regency Cambridge
575 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, Mass. 02139
617 - 492-1234**

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906, is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

PRESS ROOM will be posted in lobby

**CONTACT: Natalie Flatow, Press
Frances Rosenberg, TV-Radio**

FOR RELEASE AFTER 2 P.M.

FRIDAY, OCT. 27, 1978

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., Oct. 27... The American Jewish Committee's National Executive Council today urged Committee members throughout the country to support quota-free affirmative action programs in order to help members of minority groups train for and obtain jobs, as well as for admission to colleges and universities.

At its meeting at the Hyatt Regency Hotel here, the Council, the Committee's top policy-making body, recommended that AJC's Chapters in every part of the United States work with minority, women, union, business, government, and other leaders to replicate affirmative action programs in employment that have been effective. At the same time the Chapters were urged to monitor affirmative action programs to ensure that they remain free of quotas.

The Council also called on the Chapters to organize meetings of Jewish businessmen to assist them in developing affirmative action programs for their own businesses, and to help them create jobs for disadvantaged youth. The exclusion of Jews from the executive suites of major corporations was also singled out as an area requiring affirmative action efforts.

Sholom D. Comay, Chairman of AJC's Domestic Affairs Commission, stated that the American Jewish Committee would continue to work with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights for "a job at a living wage for everyone willing and able to work or who can be qualified for work by training."

The Council congratulated President Carter and the Congress for its passage of the Humphrey-Hawkins Full Employment and Balanced Growth Act, which it has supported.

Seymour Samet, Director of AJC's Department of Domestic Affairs, revealed that the U.S. Secretary of Labor had responded favorably to the American Jewish Committee's recommendation that unemployment insurance be used to supplement voluntary work-sharing,

more.....

and had agreed to spend some \$4 million on two pilot projects.

"We urge continued support for the use of quota-free goals and timetables in order to measure the effectiveness of affirmative action programs in employment," the Council said. "It must not be forgotten that discrimination is still a tragic fact of life for many people in this country. We must move to eradicate it." The Council statement continued:

"Though some areas of the country are harder hit than others, unemployment is a serious problem from Maine to California, Alaska to Hawaii. It hits hardest at the least trained and those most victimized by discrimination. In January, 1978, the white unemployment rate was 5.5 percent, while the black rate was 12.7 percent-- more than twice as large."

It was also stressed that AJC Chapters should undertake support for affirmative action programs in education: in meeting with college and university presidents, and in offering aid in reviewing admissions programs before and after admission decisions have been made.

Founded in 1906, the American Jewish Committee is this country's pioneer human relations organization. It combats bigotry, protects the civil and religious rights of people at home and abroad, and seeks improved human relations for all people everywhere.

10/20/78
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A, EJP, NEG-A



NEWS COMMITTEE

FROM THE

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE Institute of Human Relations, 165 E 56 St., New York, N Y 10022, (212) 751-4000

Oct. 26-29
Hyatt Regency Cambridge
575 Memorial Drive
Cambridge, Mass. 02139
617- 492-1234

The American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906 is the pioneer human-relations agency in the United States. It protects the civil and religious rights of Jews here and abroad, and advances the cause of improved human relations for all people.

MORTON YARMON, Director of Public Relations

CONTACT: Natalie Flatow, Press
Frances Rosenberg, TV-Radio

PRESS ROOM will be posted in lobby

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., Oct. 27...The American Jewish Committee today announced that a leading Catholic academic institution in Bavaria, West Germany, would sponsor a symposium of Catholic and Jewish scholars in Munich next month on the relationship of the Oberammergau Passion Play to the development of anti-Semitism in Germany and in Christian culture.

The symposium, which will be held November 19, will be sponsored by the Catholic Academy of Bavaria in cooperation with the American Jewish Committee's Interreligious Affairs Department.

Announcement of the symposium was made by Miles Jaffe, Chairman of the AJC's Interreligious Affairs Commission, at the annual meeting of the AJC's National Executive Council. The Council, the agency's highest policy-making body, continues its sessions through Sunday at the Hyatt Regency Cambridge Hotel.

The AJC has long been concerned with the effect of the Oberammergau Passion Play, and derivative Passion Plays given in other parts of the world, on Jewish-Christian relationships, Mr. Jaffe explained. Last July, Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum, AJC's National Director of Interreligious Affairs, and William S. Trosten, AJC Director of Development, met with Dr. Franz Henrich, President of the Catholic Academy of Bavaria, on the Oberammergau Passion Play issue. At that time, the AJC leaders suggested that a dialogue among Catholic and Jewish scholars on the historical and theological issues represented in the Passion Play could prove helpful, and the Academy subsequently decided to sponsor a symposium on the subject.

Rabbi Tanenbaum will present one of the major papers at the symposium. He has also been invited to speak in the village of Oberammergau following the symposium on the religious and historical factors that have contributed to anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere. It is believed that never before has a Jewish spokesman been invited to address

MORE.....

a public gathering in Oberammergau on anti-Semitism and Jewish-Christian relations.

Outlining the significance of the symposium, Mr. Jaffe pointed out that "this will be the first time in the history of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which dates back to 1634, that a German Catholic group of such prestige has taken the initiative in cooperation with a Jewish body to examine the root causes of anti-Semitism engendered by certain accounts of Jesus' death, including Passion Plays. More than 20 years ago, the AJC made an exhaustive line-by-line analysis of the script then used in the play's performance. It concluded that it was a highly anti-Semitic document 'that could not help but contribute to the misunderstanding of Jews and Judaism'."

Mr. Jaffe added that in the past two decades, AJC had been deeply concerned with the issue, including the controversy over which version of the Play was to be produced. Over the centuries, it has been performed in at least five different versions. The Play, which is a major tourist attraction in the German town of Oberammergau, is given once every ten years. In 1970, more than 500,000 people from 113 countries witnessed performances. The next series of performances is scheduled for 1980.

The symposium in Munich will have as its central subject "The Passion of Jesus - Then and Now," and will focus on five major themes:

1. The passion of Jesus in historic perspective, including an examination of the Roman occupation of ancient Judaea and the circumstances of Jesus' trial.

2. The varying interpretations of Jesus' passion in different parts of Christian Scripture.

3. The death of Jesus and the holy will of God, examining the foreordaining of Jesus' death from a theological viewpoint.

4. The Good Friday liturgy, looking at the meaning of the changes that have been made in the service since Vatican Council II.

5. The possibilities and limitations of artistic portrayals of the Passion of Jesus. This will include the historic background of the Passion Play; the relationship of the Passion Play to the current religious climate; and the role of the Passion Play in fostering anti-Semitism throughout history.

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10/19/78
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THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

PARIS OFFICE • 30, Rue La Boetie Paris 75008, France • Elysees 69-11, 83-63 • Cable: Wishcom, Paris

Abraham Karlikow, European Director

FEB 28 1978

February 16, 1978.

Memorandum

To: Marc Tanenbaum
From: Zacharia Shuster

I am sending you herewith photocopy of an article published in the Sued-Deutsche Zeitung of Munich, of Friday February 10, which reports extensively the statements made by AJC personalities with regard to the decision by the people of Oberamergau to oppose the performance in 1980 of the new version of the passion play.

Alongside of this article there is a report from Oberamergau that the City Council, however, has decided by a vote of 9 against 6 to introduce in 1980 the new text which we have seen last August.

It should be noted, however, that a new City Council will be elected on March 5th and may again decide on this issue.

The same newspaper published an editorial in favor of the reformed text, copy of which I am also enclosing herewith.

I hope to talk to you on the phone about this subject within the next few days.

Oberammergau und der Rest der Welt

VON HANNES BURGER

EINE MUTIGE ENTSCHEIDUNG hat der Gemeinderat von Oberammergau zugunsten einer Reform des Passionsspiels getroffen, die auf die älteste Textfassung aus der eigenen Tradition zurückgreift. Diese Entscheidung dürfte freilich nur eine vorläufige sein. Die Mehrheit des Gemeinderats ist des Beifalls zwar der meisten Medien und aller Religionsgemeinschaften, nicht aber der Oberammergauer sicher, die höchstens zur Hälfte die Reform gutheißern. Bald schon wird ein neugewählter Gemeinderat am Ruder sein, der theoretisch den für 1980 getroffenen Beschluß wieder rückgängig machen kann.

TROTZDEM war es wichtig und auch logisch, daß die Mehrheit des gegenwärtigen Gemeinderats noch ihre Politik einer künstlerischen und religiösen Erneuerung des Passionsspiels aus der Substanz der eigenen Spielgeschichte heraus konsequent zu Ende geführt hat. Die CSU und ihr nahestehende Gemeinderäte haben damit in Oberammergau möglicherweise ihren erneuten Sieg bei den Kommunalwahlen im März gefährdet. Aber sie haben ein Signal gesetzt und bewiesen, daß langfristige Verantwortung für das Ansehen und die wirtschaftliche Grundlage einer Gemeinde mehr sind als die Rücksichtnahme auf augenblickliche Stimmungen der Bevölkerung.

EINE PRÄZISE EINSCHÄTZUNG der wirtschaftlichen Risiken, die ein Passionsspiel dieses Ausmaßes — eine halbe Million Besucher — mit sich bringt, liegt dem Beschluß des Gemeinderats zugrunde. Die Bürgerbefragung hat kürzlich ergeben, daß auch diejenigen Oberammergauer, auf deren wirtschaftliche Existenz sich das Passionsspiel auswirkt, überwiegend eine Reform für erforderlich halten. Wer persönlich nichts riskiert, kann freilich ohne Rücksicht auf Verluste die alte Platte unverändert ablaufen lassen. Die Verluste waren jedoch schon 1970 spürbar, als die Boykott-Aktion der amerikani-

schen Juden zur Rückgabe zahlreicher vorbestellter Arrangements führten. Zwar würden in Oberammergau selbst die Minderertrahmen kassiert, aber die Lufthansa und zahlreiche Reiseveranstalter machten aus ihren geschäftlichen Einbußen und aus ihrer Verärgerung kein Hehl.

BEIM NÄCHSTEN MAL wäre der Schaden weit über Oberammergau hinaus ungleich größer. So würde nach der erfolgreichen Probe-Version mit dem Barack-Text Rosners die Ausrede einer fehlenden Alternative zu dem von vielen als artifiziell angesehenen Stück Daisenbergers entfallen. Zudem käme derzeit nicht wenigen im Ausland der alte Vorwurf des Antisemitismus für eine antideutsche Kampagne sehr gelegen.

FÜR DIE JUDEN und die Repräsentanten ihrer Religion stellen christliche Passionsspiele generell ein Problem dar, weil historisch nicht korrekte, die Rolle des jüdischen Volkes verzerrende und ihnen die Kollektivschuld am „Gottesmord“ anlastende Darstellungen der Passion Christi für sie Bestandteile ihrer eigenen Leidensgeschichte sind. Viele antijüdische Ausschreitungen wurden im Laufe der Jahrhunderte mit diesem scheinbaren religiösen Alibi gerechtfertigt. Am Oberammergauer Passionsspiel, als dem bekanntesten in der Welt, wollen die Juden offenbar die Auseinandersetzung exemplarisch für alle Passionsspiele durchsetzen. Dies ist der Grund, warum es ihnen sowohl mit dem Verständigungsangebot als auch mit der Androhung von weltweiten Konsequenzen bitter ernst ist.

WER IN OBERAMMERGAU diese Zusammenhänge noch nicht begriffen hat, sollte sich — bevor man gegen den jüngsten Gemeinderatsbeschluß im Wahlkampf Sturm läuft — auch einmal die Folgen vor Augen halten für den Fall, daß man hierzulande einmal der ständigen Querelen im Passionsspieldorf überdrüssig wird.

Jüdische Stimme zum Passionsspiel

Amerikanisches Komitee schreibt an den Oberammergauer Bürgermeister / Votum für Rosner-Text

Von unserem Redaktionsmitglied Hannes Burger

MÜNCHEN, 9. Februar — Nach zwei Besuchen in Oberammergau haben sich führende Vertreter des Amerikanischen Jüdischen Komitees (AJC) erstmals öffentlich zur Diskussion um das Oberammergauer Passionsspiel von 1980 geäußert. In einem sehr freundlich gehaltenen, aber unmißverständlich warnenden Brief an Bürgermeister Ernst Zwink haben der Präsident der Nationalen Kommission für die Beziehungen zwischen den Religionen, Miles Jaffe, der Nationaldirektor der gleichen Einrichtung, Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, und der Direktor für religiöse Entwicklungen, William S. Trosten, zu erkennen gegeben, wie ernst es den Repräsentanten der amerikanischen Juden mit der Frage des Antisemitismus in christlichen Passionsspielen ist. Aus dem Brief, der der *Süddeutschen Zeitung* zur Kenntnis gegeben und in New York vor der Presse erläutert wurde, geht hervor, daß eine Wiederholung der bisherigen umstrittenen Spielauffassung massive Gegenreaktionen zur Folge hätte, die nicht allein Oberammergau,

sondern die gesamte Bundesrepublik treffen könnten.

Die Vertreter des Amerikanischen Jüdischen Komitees waren im August des vergangenen Jahres nach Oberammergau gekommen, um sich einen Eindruck von der Probe der Barockpassion nach Peter Ferdinand Rosner zu verschaffen, die den umstrittenen Daisenberger-Text aus dem 19. Jahrhundert ablösen soll. Nach einer langen Diskussion mit Spielleiter Hans Schwalghofer, Textbearbeiter Alois Fink und Oberammergaus zweitem Bürgermeister Helmut Fischer hatten die jüdischen Vertreter erklärt, sie seien vom ehrlichen Willen der Passionsspielreformer überzeugt zu einer Verbesserung der christlich-jüdischen Beziehungen beizutragen. Gegenüber Text und Aufführung des Passionsspiels nach Rosner werde der Vorwurf des Antisemitismus nicht mehr erhoben; die Werbung zum Besuch Oberammergaus könne in Amerika voll unterstützt werden.

Beunruhigt durch die dorfintern Auseinandersetzungen sowie durch die Aktivitäten von Bürgermeister Zwink und einer Bürgerinitiative gegen die Neuinszenierung des Passionsspiels nach Rosner haben die jüdischen Repräsentanten aus Amerika während eines zweiten Besuchs in Oberammergau in der vergangenen Woche auch mit den Anhängern des Daisenberger-Spiels gesprochen. Vom Ergebnis scheinen sie jedoch wenig befriedigt nach Amerika zurückgekehrt zu sein.

In dem Brief an Bürgermeister Zwink wird daran erinnert, daß gerade durch die Entscheidungen des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils im Verhältnis zwischen den Religionen große Fortschritte gemacht worden seien — „von Toleranz über Verständnis bis zu gegenseitiger Anerkennung“. Wörtlich heißt es: „Wir meinen, daß die Öffentlichkeit keine religiöse Aussage mehr tolerieren wird, welche dem jüdischen Volk eine Kollektivschuld und eine historische Verantwortung für die Kreuzigung Jesu anlastet.“

Auch ein Passionsspiel in Oberammergau, das ebendiese zum Inhalt habe, werde von einem verantwortungsbewußten Publikum nicht akzeptiert werden. „Eine solche Aufführung würde nicht stillschweigend hingenommen, sondern auf aktiven Widerstand stoßen.“ Dieser Widerstand könne aber nur dazu führen, den Wunsch des Publikums in Amerika und anderen Ländern zu beeinträchtigen, ein Passionsspiel zu besuchen, das es eigentlich gerne sähe.

Die Sprecher der Juden in den USA „glauben aber, daß diese amerikanische Reaktion nicht nur dem Kartenverkauf und dem Wunsch eines Besuches in Oberammergau abträglich wäre. Die deutsche Entwicklung und Leistung in den

letzten Jahren ist in unserem Land und anderen westlichen Ländern viel bewundert und anerkannt worden. Unglücklicherweise ist es aber auch wahr, daß noch Mißtrauen und Zweifel an der Tiefe und der Dauerhaftigkeit der demokratischen Werte in Ihrem Lande bestehen. Wir fürchten, daß die Reaktion auf Ihre Entscheidung nicht nur die Meinung über Oberammergau, sondern auch das Image der Bundesrepublik insgesamt belasten wird. Dies könnte eintreten, obwohl die deutsche öffentliche Meinung eindeutig die Möglichkeit einer Aufführung der Rosner-Fassung begrüßt hat.“

Sie wollen selbstverständlich das Recht Oberammergaus nicht bestreiten, auch eine Entscheidung für die Daisenberger-Version zu fällen, betonen die AJC-Vertreter. Aber über die dann unvermeidlich folgenden Reaktionen in Amerika und anderen Ländern müßten die Oberammergauer sich im klaren sein. „Nachdem wir unwiderruflich unsere Aufgabe darin sehen, gegen das Prinzip der Kollektivschuld zu kämpfen, ob es sich um Juden oder bayerische Dorfgemeinschaften handelt“, heißt es weiter, „hoffen wir, daß Sie unseren Wunsch, Ihnen die Konsequenzen Ihrer Entscheidung aufzuzeigen, als ehrliche Bemühung um eine Hilfe verstehen.“

Zum Versuch der Bürgerinitiative in Oberam-

9:6 für die Reform

Beschluß des alten Gemeinderats

Oberammergau (KNA) — Wenn es nach dem Willen des noch bis zum Frühjahr amtierenden Gemeinderats geht, wird im Jahre 1980 die heftig umstrittene „Reformpassion“ aufgeführt. Mit neun gegen sechs Stimmen entschied sich das Gremium am Mittwoch für das im letzten Jahr in mehreren Probeaufführungen dargebotene Spiel nach dem barocken Text des Paters Rosner aus dem 18. Jahrhundert.

Theoretisch ist eine Änderung dieses Beschlusses durch, den aus den Kommunalwahlen am 5. März hervorgehenden neuen Gemeinderat zwar möglich. Im Lager der Reformen meint man aber, die Gemeindeväter müßten sich dies sehr wohl überlegen.

mergau, ein paar Streichungen und geringfügige Umformulierungen einzelner Wörter und Sätze als Neubearbeitung der Daisenberger-Passion auszugeben, schreiben die amerikanischen Juden: „Wir sind im Besitz beider Texte des Passionsspiels und haben die Probespiele der Rosner-Version gesehen. Wir können nicht stark genug betonen, daß der Aussage bei Daisenberger das Thema der Kollektivschuld der Juden am Tode Jesu zugrunde liegt. Es ist unsere Auffassung, daß keine Bearbeitung, weder Streichungen noch Korrekturen und dramaturgische Tricks diese Tatsache überdecken können. Die Daisenberger-Version wird in unserem Lande immer als ein Ausdruck antisemitischer Gefühle gesehen und als solcher abgelehnt werden.“

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Günther
10. 2. 78

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TRANSLATION

Oberammergau
May 17, 1978

Hans Schwaighofer
Kircheckgasse 12
8103 Oberammergau

Mr. William S. Trosten
American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street
New York, N.Y.

Déar Mr. Trosten:

After our last telephone conversation I spoke to Dr. Fink and with the Board of Arbeitsgemeinschaft about your suggestion to come to Oberammergau to meet with either the Town Council or directly with the people. Everyone felt that this was an excellent suggestion and were in complete agreement. In view of the present situation, they were of the view that the date of this meeting should be put off until the fall and that the meeting should be well prepared.

It was suggested that a symposium be arranged consisting of one Catholic theologian (perhaps Father Sanders) one Protestant theologian, experts from your side and Bishop Schwarzenböck. The participants would make short statements pertaining to the important Passion and text problems, make their position known to the people and be available for discussion. The invitation would be extended by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft and preparatory conversations with the participants could be arranged by Dr. Fink as well as by the Arbeitsgemeinschaft.

This is our suggestion.

The new director, Hans Maier, indicated in a newspaper clipping which I enclose, his intention to make significant changes in the Daisenberger Text. Apparently, he does not fully understand the difficulties of his proposal. Indeed, his proposal would mean the creation of a new text -- something that is not wanted.

continued....

As of this time, the name of the person who will do the adaptation is unknown. In any event, the result will not be much different from the changes made in 1970. The basis of this new adaptation is the text I sent you some time ago, which already included some of the deletions.

As to whether the Anti-Defamation League met with Cardinal Ratzinger after their visit in Oberammergau is not known. The gentlemen also wanted to try to get a message to Cardinal Ratzinger from the Vatican.

Yesterday, May 16, 6:20 P.M., there was a report over Bavarian Radio of the International Congress of Christians and Jews meeting in Vienna. They too plan a demonstration in Oberammergau. It was also reported that American bishops and Jewish organizations will urge tour promoters and airlines not to include Oberammergau in their programs.

The reports about the text adaptation of Daisenberger are sleazy because, as yet, the Town Council has not discussed this.

With best regards,

(S) Hans Schwaighofer

cc: B. H. Gold
M. Jaffe
M. A. Tanenbaum



TRANSLATION

BAVARIAN RADIO
RUDIGER STOLZE:

MAY 5, 1978

DAS ECHO VON OBERAMMERGAU

ONE REALLY DOESN'T WANT TO BELIEVE IT: THAT THE COMMUNITY OF OBERAMMERGAU, DESPITE ALL EXPERIENCE, ALL ADVICE, AND ALL COMMON SENSE, WANTS TO HOLD ON TO THE OLD PASSION PLAY. WITH THE DECISION TO REJECT A REFORM OF THE PASSION PLAY ON THE BASIS THAT IT IS UNTRIED AND REQUIRES MUCH MORE WORK THE TOWN COUNCIL HAS VIOLATED ITS OWN CONSCIENCE. A PLURALITY DOES NOT PROTECT ONE AGAINST STUPIDITY.

HARD WORDS, DEAR LISTENERS, BUT THE CITIZENS OF OBERAMMERGAU WILL HEAR MUCH MORE IN THIS CONNECTION AND CORRECTLY SO

IN MY OPINION:

"STEEPLE POLITICS" -- FROM THE "WOODCARVER'S VILLAGE" -- IN THE EVENT THAT THIS CORRECTLY DESCRIBES WHAT HAS HAPPENED -- HAS ATTRACTED WORLD WIDE ATTENTION. IF THIS "DRAMA OF OBERAMMERGAU" OR SOME SIMILAR EVENT HAD TAKEN PLACE SOMEWHERE ELSE ONE COULD DESCRIBE IT AS PROVINCIALISM AND FORGET ABOUT IT. BUT OBERAMMERGAU IS DIFFERENT. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN A WORK OF ITS CITIZENS AND THE COMMUNITY THAT DEVELOPED THE PLAY ABOUT THE SUFFERING AND DEATH OF JESUS CHRIST INTO A WORLD RENOWNED ATTRACTION. THEIR RESPONSIBILITY HAS ALSO INCREASED AND THE OBERAMMERGAUER CAN NO LONGER EVADE THIS FACT. THEIR RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT ONLY AFFECT THEM BUT OUR COUNTRY, THE

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIONS AND
THE VIEW OF US THAT WE OFTEN RESENT AS "THE UGLY GERMAN (HORRIBLE
GERMANS, ETC.)

IN THIS CONNECTION THE OBERAMMERGAUER AS ALWAYS ARE POORLY
COUNSELED NOT TO CONCERN THEMSELVES ABOUT THE OPINIONS FROM
OUTSIDE. THE OPPONENTS OF REFORM CHARGE THAT THE NEW VERSION
IS TOO MUCH OF A SPECTACULAR AND DOES NOT EXPRESS THE TRUE
FEELINGS OF THE PEOPLE -- ALWAYS ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS. IF ONE
WERE TO CHANGE THE PASSION PLAY, IN THEIR VIEW, THERE WOULD BE
FEWER VISITORS TO THE VILLAGE. BUT, LOOKING AT THE SITUATION
NOW, EXACTLY THAT WILL OCCUR IF THE OLD VERSION WHICH ACCORDING
TO THE BUERGERMEISTER WILL BE ONLY SUPERFICIALLY CHANGED,
IS PLAYED. IN 1970, JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS CALLED FOR A BOYCOTT
OF THE PLAY. MANY VISITORS PARTICULARLY FROM THE UNITED STATES
AND ELSEWHERE AVOIDED THE "WOODCARVER'S TOWN." ALSO, THE
CATHOLIC CHURCH DISTANCED ITSELF FROM THE PLAY. IN 1970 THEY
DENIED THE OBERAMMERGAUER AND THEIR PLAY OFFICIAL RECOGNITION.
THERE IS NO REASON TO BELIEVE, PARTICULARLY AFTER THE LATEST
DEVELOPMENTS AND DECISIONS, THAT THEY WILL DO ANYTHING DIFFERENT
NOW. IN ADDITION, THERE ARE DIFFICULTIES AT HOME. MANY CITIZENS
WHO ARE READY AND ABLE TO PLAY HAVE REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE OR
OR COOPERATE IN A FUTURE PERFORMANCE OF THE OLD TEXT. ON TOP
OF THESE VERY REAL PROBLEMS FOR THE COMMUNITY THERE IS ANOTHER
MORE OVERPOWERING THEME: THE GENERAL DISCUSSION OF THE

OF THE POSSIBILITIES AND LIMITATIONS OF PASSION PLAYS
ALTOGETHER -- DEALING WITH THE CHARGE THAT THE JEWS ARE
RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF CHRIST. THE STYLE OF THE OLD
TEXT IS NO LONGER UP-TO-DATE. IN THE REFORM PRODUCTION A
CERTAIN DEPERSONALIZATION TAKES PLACE. GREED, HATE AND EVIL
ARE ALL PORTRAYED AS ALLEGORIES. NO DOUBT THAT THIS RESPONDS
TO THE OBJECTIONS OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND CORRESPONDS
TO THE DEMANDS OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL. OBERAMMERGAUER,
ON THE OTHER HAND, WANT TO BUILD THEIR FUTURE ON A QUESTIONABLE
PAST. THE MEMBERS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL WANT A CLEAR DECISION
THAT WILL BRING PEACE TO THE COMMUNITY. IT MIGHT BECOME
CALMER IN OBERAMMERGAU BUT ITS CITIZENS ARE HEARING THE
ECHO.

cc: B. Gold
M. Tanenbaum
M. Jaffe

Hans Schwaighofer
Kircheckgasse 12
8103 Oberammergau

Oberammergau, 17.1.1978

American Jewish Committee
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street
New York, N.Y
Mr. William S. Trosten

Sehr geehrter Herr Trosten!

Nach unserem letzten Telefongespräch habe ich mit Herrn Dr. Fink und anschließend mit dem Vorstand der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Ihren Vorschlag nach Oberammergau zu kommen, um mit dem Gemeinderat oder mit der Bevölkerung zu sprechen, beraten.

Alle Beteiligten fanden diesen Gedanken ausgezeichnet und haben ihn grundsätzlich befürwortet.

Auf Grund der augenblicklichen Situation waren sie jedoch der Meinung, man sollte den Termin für dieses Gespräch auf den Herbst verlegen und gut vorbereiten.

Vorgeschlagen wurde, ein Symposium einzuberufen, dem 1 katholischer Theologe (vielleicht Herr Pfarrer Sanders) 1 evangelischer Theologe und Experten von Ihrer Seite sowie der Regionalbischof Schwarzenbock angehören.

Die Herren sollten in kurzen Statements zu den wichtigen Passions- und Textproblemen vor der Bevölkerung Stellung nehmen und darüber diskutieren.

Eine Einladung wurde von der Arbeitsgemeinschaft vorbereitet, vorbereitende Gespräche mit den betreffenden Herren konnten von Dr. Fink sowie auch von der Arbeitsgemeinschaft eingeleitet werden.

Dies wäre der Vorschlag der Arbeitsgemeinschaft.

Der neue Spielleiter, Hans Maier, hat in einer Zeitungsnotiz, die ich beilege, "wesentliche Änderungsabsichten" am Daisenbergetext bekanntgegeben. Scheinbar sind ihm die Schwierigkeiten, die dabei eintreten, nicht in vollem Umfange bekannt d.h., daß diese Absicht eine Neuschöpfung bedeuten mußte, die nicht gewollt ist.

Der Textbearbeiter vernahmt sich bis zur Stunde anonym. Das Ergebnis wird sich von der Textstreichung 1970 sicherlich nicht wesentlich unterscheiden.

Als Grundlage soll der Ihnen bereits zugegangene, schon mit Streichungen versehene Text verwendet werden.

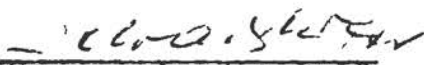
Inwieweit die 'anti-Diffamation-Liga' nach ihrem Besuch in Oberammergau auch mit Kardinal Ratzinger ins Gespräch kam, ist nicht bekannt geworden.

Die Herren wollten auch versuchen, über den Hl. Stuhl in Rom eine Nachricht an Kardinal Ratzinger zu vermitteln.

Im Bayer. Rundfunk kam gestern, 16. Mai - 18.20 Uhr, eine Meldung von einem internationalen Kongreß christlich-jüdischer Zusammenarbeit in Wien, von dem aus eine Demonstration in Oberammergau geplant ist. Amerikanische Bischöfe und jüdische Organisationen wenden sich an die Reiseveranstalter und an die Fluglinien, Oberammergau nicht in Ihr Programm aufzunehmen.

Die Meldungen über Textbearbeitung des Daisenbergetextes sind fadenscheinig, denn im Gemeinderat wurde darüber bis jetzt noch nicht beraten.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen
verbleibe ich
Ihr


(Hans Schwaighofer)

THE ARCHBISHOP
OF MUNICH AND FREISING

Kardinal-Faulhaber-Strasse 7
8 Munich
May 11, 1978

Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56th Street
New York, New York 10022

Dear Mr. Tanenbaum,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of April 27, 1978, in which you bring to my attention various exchanges of letters concerning the 1980 Oberammergau Passion Play. To go right to the heart of the matter: In the total context of this complex problem, I cannot see it as my task as Archbishop of Munich to force adoption of the Rosner text -- particularly since the trial performance has clearly shown the limits of our capacity to make the Baroque drama with its Heaven, Hell and devils come to life. In any case, given all that has happened, such an attempt would be hopeless. On the other hand, as I have repeatedly stated, I will emphatically urge that, consonant with Nostra Aetate, no assertion whatsoever of a collective Jewish guilt be allowed to remain. On this matter, I will make contact with currently responsible agencies in Oberammergau.

I would now like to ask Jewish agencies, for their part, not to link Dachau and Auschwitz with the Christian faith. As is well known, Nazi anti-Semitism has always vilified the Christian faith as a Semitic product and has always treated the Church and Judaism as belonging together. May I, for example remind you of the Hitler Youth's song, "Jews and Holy Joes (Pfaffen) -- up against the wall." The solidarity thus generated among committed Jews and Christians should continue to be stressed as the most important bulwark against all anti-Semitism.

Generally speaking, I am much concerned that the real intent of the Oberammergau Passion Play, which is to serve religious awareness, not to provoke confrontation, not be put in question by conflicts of any kind whatever.

Sincerely yours,

(s) + Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger



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Sehr geehrter Herr Tanenbaum!

Besten Dank für Ihren freundlichen Brief vom 27.4.1978, mit dem Sie mir dankenswerterweise verschiedene Briefwechsel in Sachen Oberammergauer Passionsspiele 1980 zur Kenntnis gebracht haben. Um gleich zum Kern zu kommen: In Gesamtzusammenhang dieses komplexen Problems kann ich es nicht für meine Aufgabe als Münchener Erzbischof ansehen, den Rosner-Text zu erzwingen, zumal die Probeaufführung doch auch deutlich die Grenzen unserer Fähigkeit gezeigt hat, das barocke Drama mit Himmel, Hölle und Teufeln zu vergegenwärtigen; übrigens wurde ein solcher Versuch nach allem Vorgefallenen ohnedies aussichtslos sein. Wohl aber werde ich nachdrücklich darauf drängen, wie ich schon verschiedentlich geäußert habe, daß im Sinne von "Nostra aetate" keinerlei Aussage über eine Kollektivschuld der Juden zurückbleibt. In diesem Sinn werde ich mich auch mit den jetzt verantwortlichen Oberammergauer Stellen in Verbindung setzen.

Umgekehrt möchte ich nun aber auch die jüdischen Stellen bitten, nicht Dachau und Auschwitz mit dem christlichen Glauben in Verbindung zu bringen. Bekanntlich hat ja der NS-Antisemitismus immer auch den christlichen Glauben als semitisches Produkt beschimpft und Kirche und Judentum stets als zusammengehörig behandelt. Ich

darf Sie hier beispielsweise nur an das HJ-Lied "Stellt die Juden und die Pfaffen an die Wand" erinnern. Die Solidarität, in die so überzeugte Christen und Juden versetzt wurden, sollte auch heute als wichtigstes Bollwerk gegen jeglichen Antisemitismus herausgestellt werden.

Ganz allgemein ist mir sehr daran gelegen, daß die eigentliche Absicht der Oberammergauer Passionsspiele, die religiöser Besinnung dienen und nicht Konfrontationen hervorrufen sollten, nicht durch Konflikte gleich welcher Art in Frage gestellt wird.

AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES
Mit freundlichen Grüßen
bin ich Ihr

Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

(Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger)

