

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

July 8, 1968

~~URGENT~~

FOR THE PRESIDENT FROM KATZENBACH

SUBJECT: Polish Jews and (MFN) *most favored nation*

I have learned that Congressman Farbstein intends, within the next few days, to offer an amendment to the Foreign Aid Bill withdrawing MFN from Poland. He will argue that Poland no longer deserves preferential tariff treatment because of Government-inspired anti-Semitism. Unless we take immediate action, I expect the amendment to pass. This would be unfortunate because:

- It could lead the Polish Government to more restrictive measures against Jews.
- It would harm our relations with Poland, and make it extremely difficult to return MFN treatment to Poland in the future.
- It would limit the powers of the President.

I have talked to Herman Edelsberg, of B'nai B'rith, who is one of the Jewish leaders encouraging Farbstein to introduce the amendment. He, in turn, has talked to Myer Feldman and other Jewish leaders. Edelsberg tells me that Farbstein is too far down the road now to pull back. But he also says that he and his colleagues can probably prevent passage of the amendment (by avoiding

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By JC, NARA, Date 6-21-01

a roll call vote) if he can assure proponents of the measure (including Farbstein) that there will be a strong Presidential statement--within the next several weeks, but after the Foreign Aid Bill has passed--condemning anti-Semitism in Poland.

Although I am not sure the amendment can be blocked, I think this tactic is well worth the effort. A Presidential statement would be politically useful at home, and far less harmful to our relations with Poland and to the well-being of Polish Jews than would congressional action withdrawing MFN. If the Jewish leaders cannot prevent passage of the amendment, there will be no need for a Presidential statement.

If you agree, I will tell Edelsberg that you are prepared to make a public statement of concern about the plight of Jews in Poland. (You could do this: 1) at a press conference; 2) before a group of Jewish leaders; or 3) in response to a letter--which we would generate--from a group of Jewish leaders.) I also would call in the Polish Ambassador and explain to him that:

- We will try to head off withdrawal of MFN, but the responsibility for the public outcry which this amendment represents rests wholly on the shoulders of the Polish Government.
- The President has decided that, if we are able to prevent MFN withdrawal, he must issue a strong statement condemning anti-Semitism in Poland.
- If the Polish Government fails to heed our warning, the MFN issue will certainly come up again in the next session of Congress. At that time there will be no way to prevent the passage of an amendment which would be in the interests of neither of us.

Draft Presidential statement follows:

"For many generations the American and Polish peoples have shared common aspirations for human rights and dignity. High among these rights stand freedom of religious faith and freedom from discrimination based on origin.

We know the human suffering that follows the suppression and violation of these rights.

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Like millions of other Americans, I have read with deep concern of recent developments in Poland. These reports make it clear that many of the relatively few Jews left in Poland now live in uncertainty and fear. Actions by the Polish Government, whatever may have been their purpose and motivation, have resulted in the dismissal from positions not only in Government but in professional life of people of Jewish faith or origin.

The world needs no reminder of how anti-Semitism can spread like a pestilence, leaving horror and tragedy in its wake.

The lessons of history remain too vivid and too stark to ever again permit civilized nations to make innocent men the victims of political stratagems or maneuvering. Together with my countrymen, I condemn anti-Semitism wherever it may exist, whatever form it may take, whatever it may be called. I call on the Polish Government, and on men of good will everywhere, to join with me in this condemnation."

OK to tell Edelsberg
I will make a statement
if MFN amendment doesn't
pass _____

No _____

See me _____