STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE  
of the  
National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry  

March 20, 1972  
Chicago, Illinois  

"Thou shalt not stand idly by while the blood of thy  
brother cries out to thee from the earth"  

"Let justice roll down as the waters, and righteousness  
as a mighty stream"  

The National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry, meeting in unprecedented deliberation on March 19 and 20 in Chicago, Illinois, calls upon the conscience of mankind to make known its profound concern about the continued denial of the free exercise of religion, the violation of the right to emigrate, and other human rights of the 3 million Jewish people of the Soviet Union and of other deprived groups and nationalities.  

For believing Christians and Jews, the denial of the spiritual nature of man and his right to nurture and to perpetuate the spiritual life is to deny the creative power of God in whose image He made man. The discrimination against the Jews by the Soviet Union gives us all reason to believe that, under the pretext of being anti-Zionist, it is the very contribution of the Jews to humanity which is under attack. It is precisely the Jewish testimony in the world that man's identity and freedom are not granted primarily by any state or constitution but are found in the nature of man himself. That is why each human being is threatened in his fundamental right to freedom of conscience when the Jews are persecuted.  

Realizing our own failures in racism and in other areas of human rights, we nevertheless cannot remain silent as long as the Soviet Union continues to hamper or strangle the spiritual and cultural life of the Jewish people through extreme and special acts of discrimination. We appeal to the Soviet authorities to grant religious rights to Russian Jewry -- the establishment of religious, educational, and cultural institutions for the perpetuation of Judaism and Jewish culture; the lifting of the prohibitions against publishing Hebrew Bibles and prayerbooks and the production of religious articles; the permission to train rabbis and Jewish teachers both in Russia and in seminaries abroad; the creation of a representative body of Soviet Jewry with freedom to communicate and associate with their co-religionists abroad.
We appeal to the Soviet authorities -- let them live as Jews or let them leave to be Jews. This consultation is gratified to know that the Soviet government has heard the pleas of millions in many lands and has permitted several thousands of Jews to leave the country for Israel and elsewhere. We urge the Soviet authorities to relent, and to continue to allow the thousands of others who have sought exit visas to emigrate to the countries of their choice -- which is their right under the United Nations Declaration.

This consultation is deeply disturbed by the reports of growing acts of harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrests, and confinement of Jews and dissenters to mental institutions. We appeal to the Soviet government to end this policy of wanton oppression and fear.

This consultation protests against the continued imprisonment under ruthless conditions of prisoners of conscience -- Jewish and non-Jewish -- and we urge that they be released and be shown clemency.

This consultation protests against the government sponsored campaign of anti-Semitic and anti-Zionist propaganda which constitutes an incitement to hatred and violence in contravention of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights.

This consultation resolves to commit itself to a program of continuous watchfulness and unrelenting efforts in demanding and in championing freedom for all of Soviet Jewry, of Christians, and of intellectuals -- of all who suffer for their courage and their struggle for human dignity.

This National Interreligious Consultation on Soviet Jewry consisting of Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Jews, authorizes a direct appeal to President Nixon, as the representative of the American people, to convey in clear and forthright terms to the Soviet authorities during their forthcoming conversations in Moscow the expectation of the American people -- Christians and Jews, black and white, liberal and conservative -- that these discriminations and denials of Soviet Jewry and others be stopped now, and that fundamental human rights be granted -- now. We seek the relaxation of international tensions and conflicts between the United States and the Soviet Union, and the surest test of the genuineness of the commitment of Soviet authorities to the cause of universal peace and justice is the granting of justice and freedom to the Jews and other deprived religious groups and nationalities.