

Holocaust resolution draws varied reactions in Mobile

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Many Mobilians take too lightly the idea that "another super Hitler could come on the scene, along with the scapegoating of Jews," according to the Rev. Albert S. Foley.

Father Foley, chairman of the Social Justice Commission of the Mobile Catholic Diocese, said a resolution drawn up in Mobile to show Christian solidarity with Jews produced "a lot of waffling, wavering, ambivalent reactions — the kind that characterized a lot of Christians in Germany at the onset of the Hitler rise to power" in the 1930s.

The local priest, who has served many years on the board of trustees of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in New York, said he was notified by that organization that Christians in a number of cities throughout the United States are taking steps to show their commitment to support of Jews in the face of a wave of Nazi sentiment in this country.

Subsequently, members of the commission chaired by Father Foley and members of the Catholic Diocesan Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs Commission drew up a resolution and invited support from 250 churches and organizations in the community.

The resolution drew a small response from the invitations, as indicated in the recently published signed document in The Press Register.

Father Foley pointed out that before World War II The New York Times printed an editorial ridiculing the idea that "anybody can take Hitler seriously. He'll never amount to anything. He's just a martinet strutting across the stage of Europe for a brief moment."

According to Father Foley, a sociology scholar who directs the Human Relations Center at Spring Hill College, "the Nazis were a small two-percent-minority party, and they rose to power on the fear of inflation.

"Hitler was going to solve Germany's inflation by blaming the Jews for the inflation. . . and people went for him and followed the anti-Jewish line although it was totally irrational."

Father Foley expressed concern about inflation problems in this country, saying these problems can reach a point that "somebody will look to a very strong dictator" to bring a solution.

He said, "Unless we have some kind of broad return to conscious American responsibility and individualism, the scene is going to be set for some strong dictator type who will come along and say, 'I will save you from Communism. Bolshevism. I will save you from inflation,' and the price will be that American freedom will go right down the drain."

The sociologist-priest said the

responses to the invitations to endorse the resolution in Mobile included an extreme remark that "the Holocaust (the massacre of 6 million Jews by the Nazis during World War II) never happened. It's just a Jewish lie. Our good Christian people would never have done anything like that."

One Christian leader, according to Father Foley, protested that the resolution "would do more harm than good because it would stir controversy."

The priest said, "I had hoped that some productive controversy would be generated so that people would begin discussing the roots of anti-Semitism and especially the vehicles of anti-Semitism such as the anti-Semitic jokes."