

Milwaukee Jewish Council
500 Madison Building
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53203

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The Milwaukee Jewish Council is the community relations and human relations agency of the Jewish community of Milwaukee. Many individuals and organizations in the community seek the services of the Council for programs of education in the field of human relations. It is a function of the Council to receive expressions of concern regarding problems of human rights in the community.

In recent weeks, we have had a veritable outpouring of communications from organizations and individuals registering their complaint in the strongest terms regarding the proposal to name Munich as the "sister city" of Milwaukee. We can recall very few issues within recent years which have evoked such a storm of protest and the protest has by no means been by individuals and organizations of the Jewish community alone.

The objections to the proposal are as follows:

1. Munich has a world wide reputation as the birthplace of National Socialism. The Nazi party took root in that city and its beerhalls were the setting of the early movement.

2. Munich is an international symbol of appeasement - of surrender to immoral force. The term is in full use today in any discussion of the threat of Communist aggression. As a matter of fact, the term "munich" has entered the English language. It is to be found in Webster's Unabridged Dictionary under "munichism" which is defined as:

"An attitude favoring appeasement - unresisting compliance with and capitulation to the demands of an aggressor nation."

3. In view of the fact that Munich stands nationally and internationally both as a symbol of the birth of the National Socialist terror and as a symbol of surrender to immoral force, it is viewed by those who personally suffered under the Nazi regime or who may have lost loved ones as an unnecessary and, perhaps, even thoughtless exacerbation of still unhealed wounds. Many question the benefits to be derived for Milwaukee from an association with a city whose name and quite recent past still carries such a bitter connotation in every part of the world.

It is the responsibility of the Milwaukee Jewish Council to make known to the city administration and to the "sister city" selection committee the fact that these objections have been made. It is true that they are extremely emotional. But this very fact points to the need to give careful consideration to the sister city proposal. Such a relationship between two cities can only be fruitful when there is a unified community behind the effort. In our estimation the selection of Munich will create community tension and divisiveness. This would be a very undesirable end to a worthy program.

The Milwaukee Jewish Council supports all programs designed to further international understanding and we believe the sister city program has great merit. We would, therefore, hope that the selection committee would give careful consideration to a city which would achieve communitywide backing. There are many countries throughout the world, including West Germany, which provide excellent alternatives to Munich.

In expressing its concern about the "sister city" proposal, the Milwaukee Jewish Council is not expressing hostility toward any national group. As a matter of fact, it is clear that a very large number of the citizens of Germany and even Munich, especially the present generation, bear no responsibility for the birth and rise of Nazism and the crimes committed in its name. However, we feel strongly that Munich is still very much a symbol of Nazism and appeasement and we, therefore, question the wisdom of associating Milwaukee with it at this time, especially in view of the bitterness and divisiveness it may cause in our community.