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CARDINAL GLEMP BETRAYS VATICAN COUNCIL II

by Marc H. Tanenbaum

The reported decision of Joseph Cardinal Glemp, primate of Poland, to repudiate a signed agreement by four of the most eminent cardinals of European Catholic churches to build a new convent for the Carmelite nuns away from the grounds of Auschwitz, adds turmoil to the existing distress.

Cardinal Glemp's abrupt behavior violates a solemn agreement entered into by several of the most thoughtful and respected prelates ~~and bishops~~ after two years of dialogue and negotiation with European Jewish leaders. Led by Franciszek Cardinal Macharski, Archbishop of Krakow - in whose diocese Auschwitz-Birkenau is located - the other European cardinals are Albert Decourtray of Lyons, France; Jean-Marie Lustiger of Paris; and Godfried Cardinal Danneels of Brussels.

It is evident that there are two differing Catholic churches and two contrasting nationalisms in today's Poland. One is the old Polish church which was rigid, intolerant of other religions, and deeply anti-Semitic. The newer church is constructed on the values and teachings of Vatican Council II and its commitment to positive Catholic-Jewish relations.

Cardinal Glemp is clearly the embodiment of the old, pre-Conciliar church.

There is also an old nationalism that was authoritarian and repressive. The new nationalism of the Solidarity movement appears to be tolerant and committed to democratic pluralism.

From conversations with Polish leaders last week, I have been told that many Solidarity leaders are appalled by Cardinal Glemp's recent pronouncements. He has not only betrayed the letter and spirit of Vatican Council II; he may end up doing more damage to Poland's emerging new image and standing than the Communists were ever able to do.

--Rabbi Tanenbaum, international consultant to the American Jewish Committee, is immediate past president of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations