Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992
Box 12, Folder 2, Auschwitz - Carmelite controversy, 1990.
Dear Marc,

I attach the Press Release for my trip to Hungary. I also attach the article 'Shadow on Auschwitz' from the Tablet in case you have not seen it. I also attach an article from INFORM. You should also refer to Glemp's statement in praise of British Jews (see International Herald Tribune September 26 1989 attached). Mention should be made that you were intending to accompany me on my trip to see Glemp but unfortunately your doctors did not allow me to go. It is on record that I have consulted you in achieving agreement and this should come out in the article.

Regarding my meeting with Cardinal O'Connor, my first suggestion was Monday 19th March but as I do not know whether this is convenient for the Cardinal, I can also meet him on Saturday 17th after any time on the Sunday or first thing Tuesday morning before travel to Boston.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Sir Sigmund Sternberg
Original documents faded and/or illegible
Auschwitz

Diplomatic relations between Poland and the state of Israel, brought off under Soviet pressure in 1968, are shortly to be resumed, and the Solidarity-led government has set up an international commission to re-equip the museum at the Auschwitz concentration camp. These were the two most important points made by the Polish Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, the first non-Communist leader of a Warsaw Pact country, at a conference for the religious press in London last week. Mazowiecki had himself requested the meeting as soon as he was unexpectedly chosen as Prime Minister last September. He received a letter of congratulations from Sir Sigmund Sternberg, chairman of the executive committee of the International Council of Christians and Jews, who assured him that prayers had been offered in the synagogue for him and for Poland.

Mazowiecki responded warmly to the letter and said he had received a further mark of gratitude to Sternberg’s initiative.

Though the embarrassing matter of the Auschwitz Carmelite convent was barely mentioned, it hovered in the background. Mazowiecki is clearly determined to open a new chapter in Polish-Jewish relations, he said, through an international committee.

The general Auschwitz program was devised in the Vatican, and its primary aim was to illustrate the style of Nazism. The aim now, said Ambrosiak, is “to do justice to the tragedy of the Jews and the others. The restoration of diplomatic relations will ensure Israeli participation at all stages of the process. No one has yet said whether there will be a memorial to the homosexuals who perished at Auschwitz: the Church — it is already clear — will oppose the idea.

But the Church’s role is changing. As a Catholic activist, Mazowiecki has a Dominican chaplain, Alexander Hanko-Ligowski, who suggests that he will not lack for theological advice. A grey-haired, stooping figure in dark suit and dark tie, he is a cautious intellectual rather than a charismatic personality, to whom history has not been a kindly hand. His primary purpose in visiting Britain was to get help in controlling runaway inflation and re-scheduling the crippling Polish debt. He is concerned about German reunification. It says much for Mazowiecki that despite these daunting worries, he should give such importance to improving Polish-Jewish relations.

Ecumenical choir

The French Dominican theologian Leopoldo Fortna was born on 11 February, 1924, and he is an example of the modern turn in criticism. His book, “La Nouvelle Théologie”, published in 1959, was a burst of fresh air in the Roman Catholic Church. The “new theology” concept was developed in response to the Second Vatican Council. Fortna’s work was notable for its emphasis on the human dimension of religious experience. He sought to recontextualize traditional theological concepts in the light of modern scholarship and human experience.

In his book, Fortna challenged the concept of timeless Thomism. He argued that the traditional understanding of St. Thomas Aquinas’ works was too narrowly focused on the philosophical aspects of his thought. Fortna advocated for a more dynamic and contextual approach to the interpretation of Aquinas’ works, emphasizing the need for a more dynamic and contextual approach to the development of theology.

The significance of Fortna’s work was reflected in the use of his ideas by many contemporary theologians. His approach to theology was widely influential and helped to shape the development of the “new theology” movement. Fortna’s work was a significant contribution to the ongoing dialogue between theology and contemporary culture, seeking to make the wisdom of the Church relevant to the challenges of the modern world.

The Ecumenical Choir, formally the Polish-Chinese University Choir, was an inter-Dominican quartet about the place of Aquinas. He is the “Angel Doctor” (as he was known) said the last word. Had he managed timelessness of Christian truth valid for all time? Yes, answered many Dominicans of the time, notably the famous figure of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, a professor at Rome’s Angelicum University. Chemnitz was one of his star pupils as was, at a later date, the young Karol Wojtyla.

Chemnitz’s book challenged the idea of a “timeless Thomism”. He made the very obvious point that a text could only be understood in its historical, cultural, social, and political context. There was no “disenchant theology”. The view of the way to study theology was to study its history, so as to become aware of the different ways in which Christian revelation had been expressed. In 1942 these ideas seemed like a revival of the “Modernism” condemned in 1907, so they had to be suppressed.”

“Don’t worry,” said Cardinal Emmanuel Suhard, Archbishop of Paris, in twenty years time everyone will be talking like you.” The prediction proved remarkably accurate. For when Vatican II began on 11 October 1962, Pope John could have been quoting Chemnitz when he said that a distinction must be drawn between the substance...
Notebook

The shadow of Auschwitz

The present Auschwitz museum was devised in the Stalinist period and its primary aim was to illustrate the evils of Nazism. The aim now, said Ambrogiak, is to give justice to the tragedy of the Jewish refugees of Poland, Israel and the Jewish international community.

A dedication to Gregorian chant reflects the view that it represents the authentic prayer of the early undivided Church and conveys a sense of unity which Christianity needs to recover. The Gregorian music scholar, Dr Mary Berry, of Cambridge, England, has trained the community extensively in the chant, which the choir will also perform on its European concert tour, and Cardinal Hume himself will be one of the guests at their evening concert at St John's, Smith Square, London SW1, on 22 March.

The community began in the early
**Glemp: Reflections On Auschwitz Feud**

By Mary Battiata

WARSAW — Cardinal Jozef Glemp says that he and the Polish Catholic Church had adequately understood the significance of the Auschwitz death camp as a symbol for Jewish people.

"Yes, there were some mistakes made in the past," he said in an interview. "We actually were not aware that there would be such deep feelings on the part of Jews toward this place."

Remarks by Cardinal Glemp last month renewing the relocation of a Catholic convent from Auschwitz offended many Jews and upset Polish-Jewish relations to a crisis point. About 2.5 million of the 4 million people who were killed by the Nazis at Auschwitz during World War II were Jews, and many Jews have objected to the convent's presence as an intrusion into what they say should be a Jewish memorial.

In the interview, Cardinal Glemp confirmed that he now favors moving the convent and reaffirmed the validity of the 1987 agreement between the Roman Catholic Church and Jewish organizations to relocate the church building. He said that the Carmelite nuns would be moved away from the camp.

He added that the Jewish people also must understand the importance of Auschwitz, or Oswiecim, has for Poles.

"We know that Jews went through the Holocaust and they sacrificed so many lives," he said, "but we also would like them to know that Poles also went through exterminations at Oswiecim."

In statements last month, the cardinal had sought to renegotiate the agreement to move the convent, calling it unacceptable. He said then that Jewish insistence that the church honor the agreement was an affront to Polish sovereignty and Polish suffering during the Nazi occupation. He also said that moving the nuns would be too expensive.

"The prime minister's attempt to conciliate in the interview Saturday followed a Vatican statement last week that supported the 1987 agreement and offered to help pay for a new convent to be built some distance from Auschwitz."

"We also were not aware that there would be such deep feelings on the part of Jews toward this place."

For many, it was their first looking at a controversy that began in 1983 with written protests by Belgian Jews.

Cardinal Glemp said that those who read anti-Semitism into his remarks, or into the Polish church's failure to meet the deadline for moving the nuns, were themselves guilty of a kind of anti-Polonism and were insensitive to the importance of Auschwitz as a symbol to Poles. He also said parts of his speech had been taken out of context.

Catholic and Jewish intellectuals here say the dispute reflects widespread ignorance in Poland about the extent of Jewish suffering during the war. They say the ignorance is partly the result of 40 years of state censorship, which limited open discussion of Nazi genocide toward European Jews and of the anti-Semitism that permeates Polish society.

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**GLEMP: Reflections**

(Continued from page 1)

very polite and nice and we reached some understanding," Cardinal Glemp said. He contrasted their demeanor with what he called the "unpleasant" behavior of several American Jewish students, led by Rabbi Avraham Weiss, who scaled the convent fence in July to protest the failure to move the nuns by February, the promised deadline.

The American Jews were thrown out by construction workers.

The protest offended many Polish Catholics. For many, it was their first look at a controversy that began in 1983 with written protests by Belgian Jews.

"We, in a sermon on Aug. 28, told our people to protest against the Jewish groups that nothing but be met, or speak to the portion of a people raised above all others.

Cardinal Glemp said that those who read anti-Semitism into his remarks were insensitive to the Polish church's failure to meet the deadline for moving the nuns, were themselves guilty of a kind of anti-Polonism and were insensitive to the importance of Auschwitz as a symbol to Poles. He also said parts of his speech had been taken out of context.

Catholic and Jewish intellectuals here say the dispute reflects widespread ignorance in Poland about the extent of Jewish suffering during the war. They say the ignorance is partly the result of 40 years of state censorship, which limited open discussion of Nazi genocide toward European Jews and of the anti-Semitism that permeates Polish society.
A GOOD KNIGHT’S WORK

The sad story of the Convent at Auschwitz is, by now, all too well known. Carmelite nuns converted an old building, which once housed Zyklon B gas and which forms part of the perimeter wall of the concentration camp, into a Convent. From a Polish Catholic point of view, the maintenance of a constant prayer vigil at this terrible place is a natural response. Countless Poles died at Auschwitz. However, from a Jewish point of view it smacks of the denial of the uniqueness of the Jewish tragedy, a playing down of the Jewish dimension, the expropriation of something that is ours and ours alone. The role of the Catholic Church in the Reich and was at best ambiguous and the assertion of its place at the symbolic heart of the tragedy seems insensitive and offensive.

When a group from the Manor House Society visited Auschwitz last April, what many found the last straw was the huge wooden cross visible from most parts of the camp.

The story of Jewish protest is also well known. This finally led in February 1989 to the signing by five cardinals of an agreement in Geneva that the Convent would move within two years. More than two years later the Convent had still not moved and Cardinal Glemp, Primate of Poland, had appeared to be using some strident protests from American Jewry as an excuse, insisting on seeing them as a sign of Jewish “aggression” and bad faith.

Cardinal Glemp visited Britain last September and apparently re-affirmed the refusal to move at a speech in Bristol. It was all the more remarkable, therefore, that by the following evening he had signed a letter re-affirming the Geneva agreement.

The credit for facilitating the change of mind must go to Sir Sigmund Sternberg. Over the past few years, Sir Sigmund, Chairman of the International Council of Christians and Jews, has devoted much time to building links with the highest echelons of the Catholic Church. His papal knighthood was a mark of the respect and esteem in which he is held. Eschewing stridency and accusations of anti-Semitism, he opened communications with Cardinal Glemp, offering explanations for Jewish sensitivity and endeavouring to understand the significance Auschwitz holds for Poles. He refused to indulge in inflammatory language even when some of Glemp’s pronouncements were sending shudders through the Jewish world.

He distanced himself from the accusations being made against the Catholic Church in Poland and kept talking. When Glemp came to Britain, he agreed to a private dinner with Sir Sigmund. This was also attended by the Polish Ambassador, a handful of Catholic clergy, Dr Antonio Polonsky and Rabbi Tony Bayfield. It is believed that neither Chief Rabbi nor the President of the Board of Deputies felt able to attend the dinner.

Sir Sigmund drafted a letter in English and Polish and Cardinal Glemp agreed to sign it. The letter contained an unequivocal commitment to the speedy removal of the Convent to a new site well outside the perimeter walls and to the construction of a new Ecumenical Centre. It also recognised that “the tragedy of the Shoah is beyond comparison.”

At dinner, Rabbi Bayfield suggested at an appropriate time in the future, a public ceremony of reconciliation between Catholic and Jews in Poland and also invited Cardinal Glemp to speak at the Sternberg Centre when he is next in England.

Mid-way through the evening, with Cardinal Glemp’s permission, Sir Sigmund phoned The Times and The Jewish Chronicle. A report and editorial appeared in The Times the following morning.

Sir Sigmund is cautious. The Convent has not yet moved. He is anxious that temporary accommodation be erected as soon as possible so that Jewish/Catholic relations are not further harmed by building delays. Almost immediately after the dinner Sir Sigmund flew to Rome to continue negotiations with the Vatican.

Only when the Convent is finally vacated will the end of the matter be in sight but it would not be incautious to record an extraordinary diplomatic triumph for Sir Sigmund Sternberg.
Dear Sir Sigmund,

Warsaw 12th October 1990

Thank you very much for your letter, which I received on September 10.

In response to the letter I would like to forward the following information,

1. The administrative building was opened on January 25, 1990.
2. The construction of the building and the surrounding infrastructure has been completed.
3. Of the structural projects, described in the letter, have been completed:
   a) The administrative building in its basic state. Its first visitors will be accepted in the spring;
   b) The foundations of the convent and the excavation for the main building of the Centre.
4. By winter it is planned to complete the interior of the administrative building and two stories of the convent.

The plans are dependent on weather conditions.

Thank you very much for your renewed invitation. If health allows me, I shall be glad to visit London.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

[Title]

Embassy of Poland
[end]

Original documents faded and/or illegible
Dear Professor Feldman,

Thank you for your message through fax of February 22 and the enclosed documentation concerning the groundbreaking at Auschwitz, last February 19.

I am glad to implement the information provided on this same event, during our meeting on February 14, in sending the enclosed reports from "L'Osservatore Romano" (February 23, 1990) and the Vatican Radio (February 20, 1990).

With kind regards, in shalom,

Pier Francesco Fumagalli

(with 2 enclosures)
Inizio della costruzione del Centro d'informazioni, incontri, dialogo e preghiera ad Auschwitz.


Iniziando simbolicamente i lavori di scavo S. Em. Card. Macharski ha detto tra l'altro:

"e in questo momento il mio pensiero, il mio cuore si rivolge a Dio, a Dio Omnipotente e Misericordioso pregando ardente-mente di voler beneficiare gli sforzi di tutti coloro che hanno offerto per la costruzione del Centro i loro pensieri, le loro forze, il loro spirito di sacrificio, la loro accortezza e il loro desiderio di pace... Che la giustizia, la pace e l'amore si irradiino da questo luogo. Gli uomini possono trovare qui le forze necessarie per superare tutto ciò che il divino — in nome di quel bene che è per noi il più importante dopo Dio — per il bene dell'uomo. E' ciò che esprimono questi movimenti della terra, l'inizio fisico della costruzione."

Il ministro Ambroziek ha sottolineato la commemoratività del Museo di Auschwitz e del nuovo Centro auspicando una futura collaborazione di essi. Il Museo rappresenta un monito, mentre il Centro dovrebbe diventare un luogo d'incontro di varie religioni e di varie nazioni. A nome del governo ha promesso di assistere le autorità ecclesiastiche nella sua costruzione. Ha mascherato il portale mondiale di Auschwitz quale luogo dove il popolo ebreo ha subito il maggior numero di vittime. Ha sottolineato anche la necessità di disporre diversamente alcune esposizio-ni del Museo e della prossima istituzione di un Consiglio Scien- tifico Internazionale che collaborerà alla realizzazione di tali trasformazioni.

All'inizio dei lavori di costruzione del Centro ha fatto riferimento anche il primo ministro Tadeusz Mazowiecki nella sua dichiarazione pronunciata davanti alle telecamere della TV polacca dopo il colloquio con il presidente del Congresso Mondia-le Ebraico, il sig. Edgar Bronfman, sottolineando che la presen za del rappresentante governativo alla cerimonia di Auschwitz esprime la presa di posizione del governo polacco. Ha espresso l'intenzione di eliminare ogni genere di attribiti dai rapporti tra i polacchi e gli ebrei, per condannare poi ogni forma di antise-mitismo, che bisogna combattere attraverso una giusta educazione.

STEFAN WILKANOWICZ
4) - L'ARCIVESCOVO DI MADRID, ANGEL SUQUIA GOICOECHEA, RIELETO STAMANE PRESIDENTE DELLA CONFERENZA EPISCOPALE SPAGNOLA PER TRE ANNI

MADRID. - L'assemblea plenaria dei vescovi spagnoli, riunita da ieri a Madrid, ha rieletto stamane l'arcivescovo della capitale spagnola, il cardinale Angel Suquia Goicoechea, presidente della Conferenza episcopale per i prossimi tre anni. Durante il discorso da lui pronunciato ieri all'apertura dei lavori dell'assemblea, il porporato tra l'altro ha esortato i cattolici ad esprimere le loro convinzioni in ogni campo, "ad esempio - ha aggiunto - nell'annunciata riforma dell'insegnamento" o "di fronte alla possibile liberalizzazione completa dell'aborto nelle prime settimane di gravidanza". Su questo terreno - ha sottolineato il cardinale Suquia Goicoechea - "noi credenti non possiamo rimanere inattivi".

5) - COMINCIATA IN POLONIA LA COSTRUZIONE DEL CENTRO INTERNAZIONALE DI PREGHIERA ALL'ESTERNO DEL CAMPO DI CONCENTRAMENTO DI AUSCHWITZ. INTERVENUTI IERI ALLA POSA DELLA PRIMA PIETRA IL CARDINALE MACHARSKI E UN RAPPRESENTANTE DEL GOVNO PO-LACCO

VARSAVIA. - Con una speciale cerimonia, è stata posta ieri la prima pietra del Centro internazionale di dialogo e di preghiera all'esterno di quello che fu il campo di sterminio di Auschwitz, dove si trasferiranno anche le suore carmelitane abbandonando lo edificio in cui adesso risiedono a ridosso del recinto. Alla cerimonia sono intervenuti il cardinale Franciszek Macharski, arcivescovo di Cracovia, nella cui diocesi è situata la località il cui nome polacco è Oswiecim, e il capo dell'ufficio del consiglio dei ministri Jacek Ambroziak. Fonti di stampa (Reuter) riferiscono che non vi erano rappresentanti ebrei tra le venti persone che hanno preso parte alla cerimonia. Si ritiene che la costruzione del centro sia destinata a risolvere la controversia sollevata da organizzazioni ebraiche circa la presenza delle suore carmelitane nel perimetro del campo. Come era stato concordato fin dal 1987 tra esponenti della Chiesa cattolica e dell'Ebraismo a Ginevra, il centro avrà carattere ecumenico e sorgerà a mezzo chilometro di distanza dal campo vero e proprio, su un'area di tre ettari e mezzo. Il nome ufficiale è Centro di informazione, dialogo, istruzione e preghiera. Comprenderà sale di riunizioni e conferenze, una mostra, una biblioteca e alloggi per un centinaio di ospiti. Le suore carmelitane avranno riservata una ala dell'edificio. Non è possibile per ora sapere quando il centro sarà pronto. Il primo ministro Tadeusz Mazowiecki, che ha incontrato il presidente del Congresso mondiale ebraico, Edgar Bronfman, ha sottolineato la volontà polacca di rimuovere tutti gli ostacoli con la comunità ebraica e il rifiuto di ogni manifestazione antisemita.
Ground broken for prayer site at Auschwitz

WARSAW (AP)—Ground was broken yesterday for a prayer center that officials hope will end the long-festering dispute over a Roman Catholic convent at the Auschwitz death camp.

Also yesterday, Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, met with President Wojciech Jaruzelski and Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and declared later: "There are no outstanding problems between the Jewish people and Poland."

The convent housing about a dozen Carmelite nuns on the edge of the Nazi death camp has angered Jews and others worldwide who see it as an intrusion of Christian symbols at a site where most of the victims were Jews.

The Roman Catholic Church agreed at negotiations in 1987 in Switzerland to relocate the nuns to an interfaith prayer and education center farther from the camp, but a February 1989 deadline for moving the nuns was missed.

After Polish church officials balked last year at fulfilling the agreement, the Vatican intervened in September and upheld the decision. The new Solidarity-led government of Mazowiecki also has worked to speed up construction of the new center.

Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, whose archdiocese has jurisdiction over the site near the southern
Church breaks ground for Auschwitz center

Continued from Page One

come what divides them, for the good of mankind," Macharski said as he took a shovel and dug out a few scoopfuls of dirt.

During his meeting in Warsaw with Bronfman, Macharski said his government's support of the project was illustrated by the presence at the ceremony of Jaroslaw Ambroziak, head of the Office of the Council of Ministers and the prime minister's close aide.

"This is not only a matter for Poland or Europe," Ambroziak said before the ceremony. "The construction of this center will have international significance in view of the extermination of the Jewish nation, which here suffered the greatest losses."

The first phase of construction will be to erect a temporary fence around the site, now an empty field with a few trees in the distance and a sign announcing the planned construction.

Bronfman called the groundbreaking "very important."

Citing the prayer center construction, Poland's plans to launch full diplomatic relations with Israel next week, and the government's pledge to fight anti-Semitism, Bronfman said outside Mazowiecki's office: "There are no outstanding problems between the Jewish people and Poland."

But Bronfman said he did not know exactly when the interfaith center would be completed and the nuns moved.

"I don't think deadlines are useful," he said. "It creates a kind of emotionalism that I think is not good, so I did not press for an absolute deadline. The spirit was, as soon as possible."

He also expressed concern at what he called "a resurgence of anti-Semitism in Poland."

This is part, I suppose, of the price of democracy," Bronfman said. "If you are free to do anything else, you are free also to not like people."

But he said the government's stance against anti-Semitism is "very clear."

"I express the intention of the Polish government in all matters relating to Polish-Jewish relations to arrange them successfully and to remove all frictions," said Mazowiecki, in a brief statement after the meeting.

"We are thoroughly opposed to any form of anti-Semitism and we believe that... it should be counteracted by every means."

The new religious center at Auschwitz will be about a quarter-mile from the death camp on a nine-acre site.

Known officially as the Center for Information, Dialogue, Education and Prayer at Auschwitz, it will include meeting rooms, exhibition and conference halls, a library and accommodations for nearly 100 people, PAP said.
Work begins on new home for nuns of Auschwitz

OSWIECIM (Reuters) - A Catholic cardinal and a Polish government minister dug the first spadeful of earth yesterday on the site of a planned interfaith centre intended to replace the controversial Carmelite convent at Auschwitz.

Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki said the ceremony showed his government's total opposition to anti-Semitism.

"The position of the Polish government on anti-Semitism and fighting any forms of it is clear. We are totally opposed to it," he said.

Bronfman, who visits Auschwitz today, said there were signs of a rise of anti-Semitism in Poland, but added: "There are no outstanding problems between the Jewish people and Poland."

He said a visit to Poland next week by Foreign Minister Moshe Arens to sign an agreement re-establishing diplomatic ties after 23 years showed the two countries had healed their rifts.

The new centre's site is 800 metres from the present convent, built in 1984.

Jewish organisations were outraged by the church's failure to honour a 1987 agreement to move the convent by February last year.
GROUND BROKEN FOR PRAYER CENTER TO REPLACE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ
By Susan Birnbaum and Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) - Ground was broken Monday for the interfaith prayer and education center that is to replace the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz.

The ceremony was attended by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Krakow, in whose diocese Auschwitz lies, and representatives of the Polish government. No Jewish leaders attended.

News that the ground-breaking ceremony would take place Monday was reported Friday by the World Jewish Congress and confirmed by the International Jewish Committee for Interfaith Consultations, or IJCIC, which has been negotiating with the Vatican on the issue.

Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, claimed that “the first spade had been struck” on Monday as a direct result of negotiations between his group and the Polish government. A WJC delegation arrived Sunday night in Warsaw, for meetings with Poland’s leaders.

On Monday, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki opened his conversation with the visiting WJC leaders by personally apologizing for “the hurt caused by the Auschwitz convent controversy,” Steinberg said.

He said Mazowiecki told WJC President Edgar Bronfman, in a live television broadcast, “Today, the cornerstone is being laid for the center, as a first step in the implementation of the agreement.”

Last Thursday, the president of the Bishops Conference for Relations With the Jews, Bishop Gaston Poulain, launched a fund-raising appeal among French Catholics for construction of the new center.

NUNS STILL NOT LEAVING

The construction work, which may take up to a year and a half, solves only a part of the problem posed by the convent. The estimated 17 nuns living there apparently have not left the site, and it is not clear when they will.

Steinberg said the WJC leaders will have a better idea of the timetable when they visit Auschwitz on Tuesday, when a representative of the Polish Catholic Church will officially present the delegation with the government’s commitment to build the center and to move the nuns there.

Commenting on the ground-breaking, Steinberg said that Catholic-Jewish relations “have taken an important step forward today.”

These were also the words of the chairman of IJCIC, Seymour Reich, who met with Vatican officials last week in Rome.

Reich called the ground-breaking “a concrete expression of an intention to resolve the matter. I sense a good-faith attitude on the part of Vatican officials.”

Reich, who is also president of B’nai B’rith International and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the Vatican officials acknowledged “that the wrong procedures were used” to try to oust the nuns.

In Brussels, meanwhile, progress on the construction of the interfaith center near Auschwitz did not stop several hundred demonstrators Sunday from expressing anger over the slow pace of the convent’s removal.

A leading Belgian Jew said the construction work “will certainly last several years, and may be stopped at any moment because of lack of money.”

The demonstration was called by the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations. The Belgian Jewish community has been at the forefront of protests against the convent, since its presence was first made known in 1985.

The chairman of the Coordinating Committee, Lazard Perez, remarked on a disturbing coalition of members of extreme right-wing groups and neo-Nazis, “who are eager to support those who refuse to remove the Auschwitz convent.”

(JTA correspondent Yossi Lempkowicz in Brussels contributed to this report.)
La Pologne règle l’affaire du Carmel : la mémoire juive a été entendue

La première pierre vient d’être posée dans le futur centre de prières qui sera transféré du Carmel d’Auschwitz. J’ai donné mes raisons de craindre que ce soit le vrai début de la fin de l’affaire du carmel. Il me paraît plus de problèmes que solutions entre le peuple juif et la Pologne. Voilà ce que j’ai déclaré, dans une interview légendaire pour Le Soir, pour justifier par téléphone de Vienne, à l’occasion d’un plénière du Congrès juif mondial, Edgar Bronfman, à l’issue de ses rencontre avec le Premier ministre, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, le président de la République, le général Jaruzelski et le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Krzysztof Skubiszewski.

M. Mazowiecki a interprété M. Bronfman en début des travaux d’embellissement d’un centre de prières juif-chrétiens dans l’ancien camp de concentration d’Auschwitz. Les carmélités devraient être transférées dans ce centre. Elle avait été signé le 22 février 1987 à Genève par quatre cardinaux et plusieurs représentants du judaïsme mondial, avait provoqué une vague de protestations au sein surtout des communautés juives dans le monde, mais aussi dans de larges milieux éthiques, dont certains aussi en Pologne.

Le président du Congrès juif mondial, dont l’organisation représente quelque 70 communautés juives dans le monde, doit séjourner jusqu’à mercredi en Pologne. Il doit rencontrer marci, et Gdansk, le président de Solidarité Lech Walesa, avant de se rendre en wished dans les camps d’Auschwitz et de Birkenau près de Czestochowa, où il doit "passer devant le carmel tout dévoué."

Pourquoi "passer devant" seulement ? Pourquoi n’avez-vous pas assisté à la cérémonie ?


La pose de la première pierre annonce-t-elle la fin symbolique de l’affaire du carmel d’Auschwitz qui a si longtemps empoisonné les relations juif-chrétiennes et polono-juives ?

Plus que symbolique, c’est le début des travaux. Les députés polonais ont démontré une bonne foi et une bonne volonté exceptionnelles. Il s’agit d’un nouveau départ.

Propos recueillis par POL MATHIL
Soutenu en cinquième page.
Bronfman : Fin d'une atteinte au symbole de la Shoah

Voir début en première page.

Il est passionnant d'être ici. Ils se déclarent persuadés que l'Eglise va respecter la parole donnée et ne peut promettre de faire tout pour qu'il en soit ainsi. Nous croyons que cette atteinte au symbole de la Shoah a pris fin. Désormais, il y aura de meilleures relations entre le peuple juif et le peuple polonais, de même qu'entre celui-ci et le peuple américain.

Pour quand est prévu le fin provisoire ?

Officieusement, je n'ai pas demandé une date limite, car cela crée un climat trop émotionnel. Cependant, je crois pouvoir dire que tout sera fini dans un an et demi.

La carrière n'est certainement pas le seul sujet de vos conversations ?

Le Carmel n'est certainement pas le seul sujet de vos conversations ?

...Bien sûr. Nous suivons très attentivement ce phénomène partout à l'Est. Pour ce qui concerne la Pologne, aucun de mes interlocuteurs n'a mis que bien. que le nombre de Juifs soit inférieur à la moyenne. Cela est, M. Mazowicki, n'est pas significatif et donc décidé à s'y opposer avec toute la fermeté de ses convictions et de ses moyens. L'ampleur de ce problème ouvre en fait toute l'Europe de l'Est. Il faut toutefois instaurer les mécanismes qui donnent une décapitation pour faire face à ce fléau.

C'est un fléau, mais n'est-ce pas un phénomène politique ?

Oui, l'antisémitisme est un instrument politique et une façon très traditionnelle d'exprimer le nationalisme, la xénophobie, l'agressivité, sinon engendrés par quarante années de communisme. En Pologne, où il n'y a pratiquement plus de Juifs, il est utilisé, comme ailleurs, par les adversaires du pouvoir démocratique, nouveau et fragile. En outre, les Juifs ont toujours été des bêtes émissaires désignées, et la situation économique est très difficile.

Les autres organisations juives et même non juives ont pris une position à l'égard de certaines déclarations trop nuancées du cardinal Glemp. Primaire de Pologne. Le premier est malheureusement, mais n'avez-vous pas essayé de nous donner un contexte quelconque avec son entourage ?

Notre position sur ce plan est connue. Nous avons prévu dans l'agenda que nous avons proposé aux autorités polonaises aucun contact de ce genre. Nous avons d'autres préoccupations.

Les conséquences de la réunification de l'Allemagne par exemple ?

Oui, C'est une question essentielle pour toute l'Europe. Et c'est notre grande préoccupation. Il n'est pas nécessaire de trop éloguer : nous avons beaucoup en commun, les Poles et les Juifs ont une expérience historique suffisante.

L'affaire du carmel a été déclenchée par un groupe catholique en Belgique. L'affaire a été donnée par la communauté juive de Belgique aussi. Si elle a encouragé et diminue...

...il fait évidemment rester vigilant. Mais j'espère que l'affaire du carmel approche de sa solution. Et puisque nous parlons de la Belgique, il faut que ses services de renseignement et de renseignement, l'État belge, le rôle essentiel et courageux que joue, sur des terrains, dans la recherche de cette solution, le cardinal Dammès, le primate de Belgique, quel que soit son audience, de Varsa...

Paradoxe par l'affaire du carmel, le dialogue judéo-catholique peut-il reprendre ?

Oui, l'espoir...
Auschwitz : un coup de pelle solennel

M. Macharski préside le début des travaux.
Mais aucune date n’est avancée pour le transfert du carmel

(De notre correspondant à Varsovie)

Une cérémonie solennelle a accompagné lundi matin, à Auschwitz, l’inauguration sur le terrain du futur centre judéo-chrétien et biobibliothèque, qui abritera les archives de l’ancien camp de la mort. Il sera composé de plusieurs bâtiments. Un foyer de rencontre abrita des services d’épuration, de conférences et de cinéma, ainsi qu’une bibliothèque. Une école de philosophie pourrait accueillir en une fois une centaine de personnes et sera dotée de salons de réception et de restaurant. Le carmel proprement dit, où seront transférées les religieuses sœurs, occupera un bâtiment annexe, séparé par un mur du reste du centre.

Le Saint-Siège a d’ores et déjà fait savoir qu’il participerait, par l’intermédiaire de l’une de ses congrégations, au financement du centre, à l’initiative du cardinal Macharski, qui avait confié la direction d’une fondation chargée de gérer les travaux.

À l’heure actuelle, aucune précision n’a toutefois pu être obtenue quant à la date à laquelle la construction du centre pourrait être achevée. D’ici là, les religieuses, dont la communauté juive réclame l’accueil, procéderont au transfert, resteront à la maison de l’ex-camp de la mort.

La visite de Bronfman.

Parmi les obligations de M. Macharski figuraient, lundi, une rencontre avec Edgar Bronfman, président du Congrès juif mondial, en visite en Pologne. Il n’y a plus de problème en suspens entre le peuple juif et la Pologne, a déclaré M. Bronfman. Nous sommes opposés à toute manifestation antisémite et nous continuons d’espérer qu’on peut alléger l’immeuble d’écoles, a affirmé pour sa part le Premier ministre polonais Tadeusz Mazowiecki, salué par M. Macharski, qui a souligné la proximité des Juifs et la Pologne.

La Libé, Belgique
Mardi 20 février 1990
Carmel d'Auschwitz: la première pierre de l'apaisement

Alors qu'un millier de personnes manifestaient sous les parasols, dimanche matin, dans les rues de Bruxelles, pour dénoncer le départ des carmélites installées depuis 1986 à l'intérieur de l'ancien camp de la mort d'Auschwitz, en appelant à la fin des travaux d'aménagement du centre de prières, où doivent être transférées ces carmélites, commenceront ce lundi.

C'est l'agence polonaise de presse PAP qui a annoncé la nouvelle, citant un proche collaborateur du cardinal Franciszek Macharski, archevêque de Cracovie. Le Centre international d'information, d'études, de dialogue et de prières sera bâti à 500 mètres en dehors du site du camp. Il abriterait le nouveau monument qui rendrait les carmélites déchaussées actuellement installées dans un bâtiment de l'ancien camp de la mort.

Ce centre, d'une superficie de 3,5 hectares, comprendra aussi un foyer de rencontres pour organiser des expositions, des conférences, et une salle de cinéma ainsi qu'une « maison du pèlerin » avec hôtel et restaurant.

Une fondation, mise sur pied en décembre dernier par M. Macharski et dirigée par le P. Mark Gronialis, de la cour de Cracovie, est chargée de réunir les fonds nécessaires à l'aménagement de ce centre.

Suite en sixième page.

Auschwitz : l'Eglise tiendrait parole

Voir début en première page.

Et des contrats ont déjà été signés avec des entreprises de travaux publics.


L'Eglise polonaise, avec au premier rang le cardinal-primat de Pologne, M. Jozef Glemp, avait tenté de renégocier ces accords, provoquant un tollé général au sein des communautés juives et de sévères critiques dans les rangs de l'Eglise catholique elle-même.

La polémique n'a pris fin qu'avec l'intervention du Vatican, le 19 septembre 1989, lequel avait déclaré accueillir « positivement » la construction d'un centre de prières où seraient installés les carmélites.

Si les déclarations de l'archevêque de Cracovie s'avèrent ce lundi, la première pierre du Centre de prières d'Auschwitz sera sans doute celle de l'apaisement.
Carmel d'Auschwitz : « Première pierre ce lundi, mais à quand la dernière ? »

Un petit millier de personnes ont manifesté, dimanche matin, à Bruxelles, pour que soient respectés les accords entre juifs et catholiques, à propos du Carmel d'Auschwitz. Selon ces textes, les religieuses auraient dû quitter le site de l'ancien camp de concentration volet un an après.

Les derniers jours et les événements se sont succédé. Et ce lundi matin, la première pierre du futur carmel d'Auschwitz a été jetée à Thaon-l'Abbaye. « Mais quand le sera la dernière ? », ont demandé les manifestants, pas plus rassurés que cela.

Mardi dernier, le comité de coordination des organisations juives de Belgique et du comité d'action pour le respect de la parole donnée s'étaient donné leur volonté de les promesses prêtesées à Genève en 1986 et 1987, ont tuées (qui démissions à mercredi).

Pour rappel, c'est en 1984 que des Carmélites se sont installées à l'intérieur de l'ancien camp de concentration nazi d'Auschwitz, en symbolique pour la communauté juive. Les Carmélites occupaient un bâtiment autrefois utilisé pour stocker le Zyklon-B, gaz dont sont servis les nazis dans les chambres à gaz.

C'est un peu par hasard qu'un Juif a été arrêté en Allemagne et un autre à Paris, conduisant à la récolte de fonds pour aider les juifs d'Auschwitz, dont les nazis ont été les premiers à demander le départ de ce couvent. Par la suite, les Belges se sont mobilisés pour soutenir le combat et se sont retrouvés parmis les signataires des accords avec les catholiques et les juifs, le 22 février 1987 à Genève.

A 500 mètres du camp

Les accords prévoyant que les Carmélites déménageraient en février 1989 au plus tard, mais cela n'a pas été le cas. D'ailleurs, l'Eglise polonaise a refusé de les débouter. Les jésuites ont également demandé que le site de l'ancien camp de concentration soit occupé par les Carmélites.


Les Carmélites ont été invités à participer à la création de ce Centre, dont le siège sera à Genève. Le Centre dispose d'un budget de 30 millions de dollars, financé par les Nations Unies, l'Union européenne et les États-Unis. Il a pour mission de promouvoir la paix et la coopération internationale, en particulier dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la formation et de la recherche scientifique.
Work on new convent to start near Auschwitz

WARSAW (AP) — Construction is to begin today on a religious center to house Roman Catholic nuns who have outraged many Jews by refusing to leave a convent at the edge of the Auschwitz death camp.

Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress, are to announce the start of building after meeting in Warsaw, spokesmen said.

The groundbreaking will come nearly a year after the Feb. 22, 1989, deadline for moving the nuns under a 1987 accord reached by Catholic and Jewish religious leaders in Geneva.

Jewish groups and others view the presence of the small group of Carmelite nuns as an offensive intrusion of Christianity at the death camp, built by the Nazis mainly to exterminate Jews because of their religion.

Despite the Geneva agreement, the Polish church, with backing from other quarters in overwhelmingly Catholic Poland, balked at moving the nuns from a former theater used by the Nazis as a warehouse to store Zyklon B cylinders for the gas chambers.

After international outcry grew, the Vatican intervened and announced its support for the construction of the religious center. It will be a quarter-mile from the death camp on a nine-acre site, the official news agency PAP said yesterday.

The presence of the Auschwitz convent represents a “most, most serious issue” to the international Jewish community, which is prepared to assist in transforming post-Communist Poland’s shattered economy, said Marem Stern, political consultant to the World Jewish Conference.

“It is not that we are anti-Polish but it is an issue that has to be solved, and quickly because with this whole opening of Poland we have a lot of Jews who are ready to come here and invest,” Stern said in an interview yesterday.

Bronfman will tell Mazowiecki that help is ready, “but he will also have to explain that he will not do anything until this is solved,” Stern said.

The convent issue touches on deeply sensitive issues in Poland, where a pre-World War II Jewish population of 3.5 million has been reduced to several thousand.

About 3 million Polish Jews were killed during the war. Most of those who survived subsequently emigrated, the last wave of departures taking place after an anti-Semitic political purge in 1968.

Known officially as the Center for Information, Dialogue, Education and Prayer at Auschwitz, the new building will include meeting rooms, exhibition and conference halls, a library and accommodations for nearly 100 people, PAP said.

A separate section of the building will house the convent, the Rev. Marek Glownia said. The archdiocese of Krakow appointed Glownia to lead the center and oversee construction.

The Vatican has pledged financial support for the construction, and funds also will be raised by foundations and churches elsewhere in Europe.
Experts seek to preserve evidence of death camp horror in Poland

Partly demolished as the Red Army approached, Auschwitz was liberated on Jan. 27, 1945. The camp remains much as it was left: The sign reading in German "Work Makes You Free" above the gates, the train tracks bisecting the vast expanse of Birkenau and ending feet from its destroyed crematoria.

Inside a brick barracks at Auschwitz is a museum exhibit opened in the mid-1950s. The masses of hair, piles of shoes and mounds of eyeglasses, artificial limbs, suitcases and baby clothes give the human toll a vivid dimension.

The museum staff, headed by former inmate Kazimierz Smolen, has struggled with the beautifying effect of ever-growing grass, the soothing sound of birds singing and the government's limited resources to maintain the camp's hellish authenticity.

It is left largely to the silent testimony of the names on the suitcases and the separate, less-visited exhibit supported by foreign Jewish groups to remind visitors that the camp existed mainly to exterminate Jews.

There is a phrase: "All Poles spontaneously helped Jews." Every word of this phrase could be questioned, said Franciszek Cemka, head of the Department of Museums.

"It was not all, and it was not always spontaneous. They were under the threat of death, so one was more bold, one was less," Reiss said.

Reiss said the foundation wants the preservation effort to ensure "that the real story be told, that at Birkenau, 95 percent or more of the prisoners killed were Jews."

The Polish and international teams also face difficult conservation problems, such as how to preserve barracks built by inmate laborers.

"We cannot just replace the barracks with new timber or strengthen the roofs with concrete, as they will tell us later that we have falsified it all," Marszalek-Mlynczyk said.

Pollution and a rainy climate also make things worse, Smolen said.

Still, there is no imminent danger to the artifacts, the museum director said. His staff of 175 already has a preservation program in place, though with limited funds. The museum had a 1989 conservation budget of about $55,000.

With as many as 10,000 visitors coming daily to the museum, the commission also plans to work with the surrounding town on developing accommodations, including the interfaith prayer center to house nuns whose convent on the camp perimeter led to a dispute with Jewish groups.

"I hate to be pragmatic about these things, but Auschwitz is a No. 1 tourist attraction in Poland," Reiss said.
Ground broken for new convent for nuns living at Auschwitz

By Religious News Service

(RNS) — A Roman Catholic leader joined with a representative of the Polish government Feb. 19 in breaking ground for the site of a new convent for a group of Carmelite nuns now living at the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

The ceremonial gestures by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski and Jacek Ambroziak, a representative of Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, took place almost three years to the day after Cardinal Macharski and three other European cardinals signed an agreement pledging to have the convent relocated by the end of February 1989.

When the deadline came and went with no progress last year, Jewish groups reacted in anger. The presence of nuns at the site has been a source of controversy between Catholics and Jews who believe that Auschwitz should be free of any sectarian structures.

The situation heated up last year with a July protest by a group of American Jews led by Rabbi Avi Weiss of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, N.Y., who scaled the convent walls and were beaten by Polish construction workers. Cardinal Macharski subsequently announced that he had abandoned plans to build a center for Christian-Jewish dialogue near the site because of what he called the “atmosphere of aggression and disquiet sown among us” by the protests.

Polish Cardinal Jozef Glemp further inflamed tensions by telling Jews not to “talk with us from the position of a people raised above all others” and implying that the demonstrators at the convent site might have killed the nuns if they had not been evicted.

The controversy appeared to be headed for a resolution last September when Cardinal Glemp agreed to implement the Feb. 22, 1987 agreement, following a dinner meeting in London with Sir Sigmund Sternberg, chairman of the executive board of the International Council of Christians and Jews.

According to press reports in the West, Jaroslaw Szczepanski, a spokesman for the Polish government, said the start of the construction was directly linked to the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Poland and Israel, which was scheduled to take place Feb. 27.

“The government attaches great significance to the construction of a house of prayers,” he said.

When the convent is completed, the 14 nuns at the Auschwitz site will be relocated to the new facility about 500 yards away. No deadline has been set for the completion of the project.

The groundbreaking took place during a visit to Poland by Edgar Bronfman, chairman of the World Jewish Congress. Mr. Bronfman was received in Warsaw by President Wojciech Jaruzelski and Prime Minister Mazowiecki. He sent a representative to the groundbreaking ceremony and was scheduled to visit Auschwitz the following day.

Rabbi Weiss described the groundbreaking as “a first step in the right direction,” but he suggested that the nuns could move into temporary quarters while the new facility is being built.

“Every day the nuns remain on Auschwitz grounds is a violation of the solemn 1987 Jewish-Catholic accord for their removal and is a desecration of the memory of the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust,” Rabbi Weiss said.
Jewish groups announced yesterday that they had settled a bitter conflict with the Roman Catholic Church, moving a Carmelite convent from the grounds of the Auschwitz concentration camp in Poland.

Groundbreaking is expected to begin on Monday on an interfaith center outside the gates of the former death camp, and the center will be the new home of the Carmelite order, said Elan Steinberg, chief of the New York-based World Jewish Congress.

The group of Carmelite nuns established a convent on the concentration camp grounds in 1984 in a building that had once stored the Zyklon-B gas used in the gas chambers. Two million Jews died there in World War II.

Protests against the convent began in France and spread around the world. In what became known as the Geneva Agreement of 1987, Catholic bishops agreed with representatives of the European Jewish Congress to remove the convent and build an interfaith center off the grounds.

Poland's Roman Catholic Primate, Josef Cardinal Glemp, spoke out against the agreement as the deadline passed and his comments led to strong rebukes by Jewish and Catholic leaders and Solidarity. Some of his criticism was directed at Jewish protesters who climbed over the fence of the convent during a protest there.
FAX TRANSMISSION

Total pages (including cover page) .................................................................

Date: ............................................................. 15th February 1990

To: ............................................................. Prof. Leon A. Feldman

From: ............................................................. Gerbert M. Riegner

Saw Fumagalli informed me this morning that he spoke to Wilkanowicz. The ceremony of inauguration will take place on February 19, in the presence of M. Machas and several members of the government.

Regards,

Riegner

Remarks: ..............................................................................................................
Convent dispute said nearing solution

By RUTH E. GRUBER

WARSAW — A Polish bishop active in Catholic-Jewish dialogue assured a group of visiting American rabbis recently that the dispute over the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz is on the way to a satisfactory resolution.

Bishop Henryk Muszynski, chairman of the Polish Episcopate’s Commission for Dialogue with the Jews, said construction would begin soon on an interfaith center to which nuns from the Auschwitz convent would be relocated. He said he hoped the new home for the nuns would be the first part of the center to be built.

Muszynski met with a 30-member United Jewish Appeal rabbinic mission touring Eastern Europe. He was accompanied by a leading Solidarity member of Parliament, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, who said the Solidarity-led government is looking forward to close relations with Israel.

The bishop tried to explain why it is taking so long to relocate the nuns. They were supposed to have moved off the Auschwitz grounds in February 1989, according to an agreement reached two years earlier in Geneva by a group of European cardinals and Jewish leaders.

“Activities to build [the interfaith center] will start as soon as possible in the spring,” he said.

A joint committee of church and government leaders is forming in Krakow specifically to promote its construction, the bishop added. As of now, he said, “the nuns are still in the convent.”

Muszynski explained that “it’s very hard to expect them to move from one provisional place to another, and in Krakow there is no other place for them to move.” Krakow is the nearest large city to Auschwitz and the seat of the Catholic archdiocese.

“We have to do everything possible to start building the center,” the bishop said. “First, I think we should build the part for the nuns.”

He stressed, however, that the problem is not only building the center and moving the nuns there, but changing the attitude of the Polish people on the subject.

“There’s a very strong opposition in Poland against moving the nuns,” Muszynski confided. “We need time to prepare Polish public opinion.

“We have had 45 years of our history now without contact with the Jews. Dialogue is very difficult,” he said. “We have to explain everything from the very beginning.”

Muszynski explained that to Poles, establishing the convent at Auschwitz meant placing a religious symbol at a place of martyrdom if the Communist authorities tried “banalize” and “atheize” in a way abhorrent to the deeply religious Poles.

“It wasn’t appropriation,” said. “But it’s important to put some sign of religion there. The major original people died there, I’m sure, in prayers.”

Parliament member Onyszkiewicz said the government too, “would like to see the convergent issue solved, as was agreed in Geneva, by moving the nuns.”

But agreed the issue is complicated the grass-roots attitude of Poles.

Onyszkiewicz underscored the desire of Poland’s first non-Communist government in achieving reconciliation with the Jewish people. He acknowledged that there is much in Poland’s past, particularly during World War II, that Poland could not be proud of.

At the same time, he stressed the for centuries Jews have been an integral part of Poland, with a major impact on the country’s history and development that should never be forgotten.

Muszynski also told the UJA mission that plans are under way for extensive renovation of the museum at Auschwitz, which until now “is been a museum of nationalism and Communist propaganda.” Major changes will stress more clearly the Jewish experience “in that terrible place,” he said.

A special government commission working on the transformation should be ready with a comprehensive plan by this spring, according to the government newspaper Rzeczpospolita. Some work has already begun and construction of an interfaith center for informal meetings and prayer will start “in the coming weeks,” the paper said.

It added that the commission resolved that the future of the Auschwitz museum “will be considered in consultation with Jewish organizations.”

The commission was created last year by Culture Minister Izabella Cywinka, under the auspices of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland’s first non-Communist prime minister in more than four decades.

Jewish Telegraphic Agency
PRANCE

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CONFERENCE DES EVEQUES DE FRANCE
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POUR LE CHEF DE L'INFORMATION RELIGIEUSE OU HONSIEUR LE REDACTEUR
EN CHEF

LE 14 FEVRIER 1990

A PROPOS DE LA CONSTRUCTION DU CARMEL D'AUSCHWITZ

COMMUNIQUE DE MGR POULAIN ET DU PERE DUJARDIN, RESPECTIVEMENT
PRESIDENT ET SECRETARE DU COMITE EPISCOPAL POUR LES RELATIONS AVEC
LE JUDAISME

LE COMITE EPISCOPAL POUR LES RELATIONS AVEC LE JUDAISME INFORME LES
CATHOLIQUES DE FRANCE DE L'OUVERTURE DANS LA SEMAINE QUI VIENT DES
TRAUX DE CONSTRUCTION DU CENTRE D'INFORMATION, D'ETUDE ET DE PRIERE
ET DU NOUVEAU CARMEL SUR LE TERRAIN ACQUIS DANS LA COMMUNE
D'OŚWIECIM. CELA CONFORME A L'ACCORD DE GENEVE DU 22 FEVRIER
1987.

POUR PERMettRE CETTE CONSTRUCTION, UNE SOUSCRIPTION EST LANCEE.

LES FONDS, MEME LES PLUS MODESTES, PEUVENT Etre VERSES EN FRANCE
A L'ORDRE DU COMITE EPISCOPAL POUR LES RELATIONS AVEC LE JUDAISME

AVEC LA MENTION: CENTRE ET CARMEL D'AUSCHWITZ, A ENVOYER A

L'ADRESSE SUIVANTE : COMITE EPISCOPAL POUR LES RELATIONS AVEC LE
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Les travaux du Centre de prières d'Auschwitz commenceront "dans la semaine qui vient"

PARIS, 14 fév (AFP) - La construction du centre de prières, où devront ménager les carmélites installées depuis 1984 à l'intérieur de l'ancien camp de concentration nazi d'Auschwitz, commenceront "dans la semaine qui vient", a annoncé le cardinal Maciejczyck-Macharski, archevêque de Cracovie, chargé de réunir les fonds nécessaires à la construction du Centre, et qui a précisé le père Dujardin à l'AFP.

NP/PC
CONSTRUCTION TO BEGIN SOON ON CENTER
WHERE CARMELITE NUNS WILL BE RELOCATED
By Ruth E. Gruber

WARSAW, Feb. 6 (JTA) -- A Polish bishop active in Catholic-Jewish dialogue assured a group of visiting American rabbis Monday that the dispute over the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz is on the way to a satisfactory resolution.

Bishop Henryk Muszynski, chairman of the Polish Episcopate's Commission for Dialogue With the Jews, said construction would begin soon on an interfaith center in which nuns from the Auschwitz convent would be relocated.

He said he hoped the new home for the nuns would be the first part of the center to be built.

Muszynski met with the 30-member United Jewish Appeal rabbinic mission touring Eastern Europe, which arrived in Warsaw on Monday morning and was to leave for Budapest on Wednesday.

He was accompanied by a leading Solidarity member of Parliament, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, who said the Solidarity-led government is looking forward to close relations with Israel.

The bishop tried to explain why it is taking so long to relocate the nuns. They were supposed to have moved off the Auschwitz grounds in February 1989, according to an agreement reached two years earlier in Geneva by a group of European cardinals and Jewish leaders.

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It added that the commission has resolved that the future of the Auschwitz museum "will be considered in consultation with Jewish organizations."

The commission was created late last year by Culture Minister Izabella Czynska, under the auspices of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland's first non-Communist prime minister in over four decades.

Stanislaw Krajewski, a consultant to the American Jewish Congress who is active in Polish-Jewish affairs and Jewish--More--

Catholic dialogue, said there are already some changes at the Auschwitz museum.

"Much more mention is now made of the Jewish presence at Auschwitz," he said. Also, the museum will remove references to "4 million" victims there.

"This is not a true figure," Krajewski said. "There is no way to know exactly how many people died at Auschwitz. It is probably 1.5 to 2 million -- 90 percent of whom were Jews."

JTA END

The Polish Roman Catholic Church Monday took its first practical step toward solving a dispute with Jewish groups over the presence of Carmelite nuns at Auschwitz, the former Nazi death camp.

Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Krakow announced establishment of a fund to collect funds for an international prayer center at a site near the former death camp but less objectionable to Jewish groups than the nuns' current headquarters.

The goal of the foundation is to collect money and other material goods to build the center, the official news agency PAP said. A program council will be appointed to work out an agenda of activities for the foundation.

The center was promised by Macharski in an agreement with Jewish groups in 1987, under which the nuns were to be moved by February 1989. Jewish organizations consider Auschwitz a special place of remembrance and object to nuns being said there by other religious groups.

The 14 nuns are living in a church used by the Nazis during the war to store chlorine-B gas used to kill victims before their bodies were burned in the crematoriums. The church sits adjacent to the Auschwitz wall.

Last spring, a radical Jewish teacher from New York and six of his students scaled the convent wall in a protest over the Polish church's failure to keep its agreement to move the nuns. They were chased away, but Polish bishops and the head of the Polish church, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, criticized the students and insisted the nuns had a right to stay.

Glemp's comments inflamed American Jewish groups and forced Glemp to cancel a planned visit to the United States. The Vatican eventually stepped in, offering financial aid to build the international prayer center, and Glemp assured that the nuns would be moved after all.
Work to start at Auschwitz

Construction of a new centre at Auschwitz is to begin "in the next few weeks", according to representatives of the archdiocese of Cracow. The new building, a centre for information, study, prayer and meeting, will be about 500 yards away from the former Nazi extermination camp's theatre where a Carmelite convent had existed for the past five years. Jewish groups took exception to the presence of a Catholic convent on a site which had become synonymous with the Holocaust, and agreement was reached in Geneva in February 1987 between high-level Catholic and Jewish delegations for the transfer of the nuns to another building further from the camp's boundaries. Delay in putting up the building led to severe tensions between Catholics and Jews, only resolved by firm Vatican backing for the speedy implementation of the Geneva agreement (The Tablet, 23 September 1989).

A representative of the Cracow archdiocese's press office, Marek Pernal, has told the Swiss news agency APIC that there is every hope that the work will start soon. He said that the statutes of the foundation created by the Archbishop of Cracow to oversee the work and find the money to pay for it had been deposited with the Polish Ministry of Culture in mid-January, and that there only remained some legal formalities to be settled. The chancellor of the archdiocese administration, Fr Fidelus, confirmed that this was so, and that more than half the two hectares of land needed for the centre had been obtained. But the co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress in Geneva, Gerhart Riegner, pointed out
REACTION TO CARDINAL MACHARSKI STATEMENT ON AUSCHWITZ CONVENT

BY RABBI MARC H. TANENBAUM, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS CONSULTANT FOR AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

The statement attributed to Cardinal Macharsky regarding the Auschwitz Carmelite convent, if accurate, is deeply disturbing. Should the Polish Catholic church not implement the agreement signed in Geneva with European Jewish leaders regarding the building of a new convent and interreligious center away from Auschwitz, that would constitute a serious violation of written pledges and mutual trust.

I have been speaking with Polish leaders by overseas telephone during the past several weeks, and I was informed that Cardinal Macharsky’s commitment to build the new convent and center in 1990 was firm. They argued that it was necessary to have a period of calm in which hostilities would not be stirred up so that the building plans could go forward. Apparently, the recent highly-publicized demonstrations against the Carmelite nuns have touched off a furious reaction among Polish Catholics who now support, even insist, that the Carmelite convent not be moved.

The present moment requires patience and wisdom on all sides. Several of us in Europe and the United States will intensify our contacts with Polish Catholic and government leaders in order to try to reverse this present unfortunate development. We will continue to report to the Jewish community whether we will be able to avert the tragic possibility of seeking to convert Auschwitz into a Christian holy place at the expense of what profound meaning the Shoah holds for the Jewish people everywhere.