



# THE JACOB RADER MARCUS CENTER OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH ARCHIVES

*Preserving American Jewish History*

MS-603: Rabbi Marc H. Tanenbaum Collection, 1945-1992.

Series C: Interreligious Activities. 1952-1992

Box 12, Folder 2, Auschwitz - Carmelite controversy, 1990.

**Sir Sigmund Sternberg** O.St.J. KCSG JP

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Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum  
FAX 0101 212 876 8351

Date

27th February 1990

Your ref

AMERICAN JEWISH  
ARCHIVES

Dear Marc,

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

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

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
Sir Sigmund Sternberg

[start]

Original documents  
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## Auschwitz

Diplomatic relations between Poland and the state of Israel, broken off under Soviet pressure in 1968, are shortly to be resumed, and the Solidarity-led government has set up an international commission to redesign 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 his press conference was 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. "Poles and Jews", he said through an

interpreter, "are one of the great elements of Poland, Israel and the Jewish international community."

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 Ambrosiak, is "to do justice to the tragedy of the Jewish people" and the other victims. 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, which 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 dealt a kindly hand. His primary purpose in visiting Britain was to get help in controlling runaway inflation and rescheduling 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

element. The Jewish tragedy — the greatest tragedy of World War II — was also a Polish tragedy because the Polish people also suffered greatly. "So all those Poles", he went on, "who feel deeply and who have a deep moral sense consider that there should be no anti-Semitism." That was essentially what he had come to London to say to the religious press.

Some of the details were filled out by Jacek Ambrosiak, head of the office of religious affairs. This was the Stalinist body, found in every Communist country, which had the unenviable and in the end impossible task of controlling the Church. Mazowiecki has retained the office but turned it into a kind of ministry of minorities responsible for inter-faith relations. The 600,000 Russian Orthodox Christians in north-east Poland are the biggest minority today.

But Mazowiecki feels a special responsibility toward the memory of the three million Jews who lived in pre-war Poland. Preserving and restoring their synagogues, cemeteries and religious artefacts is a first duty. The international committee to rethink the Auschwitz concentration camp site is Mazowiecki's most important innovation: the Foundation in charge of it will eventually be made up of representa-

tives of Poland, Israel and the Jewish international community. The choir will begin a 12-week European tour which will take them to Eastern Europe and finally the Soviet Union, with the direct co-operation of the Russian Orthodox Church. Through the personal involvement of Metropolitan Pitirim of Volokolamsk and Yuriev, and Metropolitan Alexi of Leningrad and Novgorod, the choir is scheduled to sing in several local churches and monasteries in addition to its programme of major concerts in Moscow and Leningrad.

All the members of the choir come from the same ecumenical, semi-monastic, mixed community at Cape Cod, Massachusetts. The Community of Jesus comprises some 300 residents of different denominations, including Catholics. Members or families are responsible for their own finances and must hold jobs outside the community, but some — the sisters and brothers — have taken vows similar to those taken by religious, giving up "the right to own, to choose and to marry".

Corporate worship centres on Holy Communion, which is celebrated according to the Episcopalian liturgy — eleven of the community are ordained clergymen — but each day the Divine Office is also chanted in Latin at seven services according to the Benedictine Solesmes rite. The special

prayer book is the 1962 Roman Missal, 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 Sixties when Cay Andersen, who had suffered a recurrence of a childhood disease which had made her an invalid, experienced healing after her friend Judy Sorensen prayed for her. It brought their two families together, and within a few months their ministry of teaching and prayer, counselling and healing had begun. Today the community is a place of renewal where thousands come for retreat, counselling and healing.

## Death of a pioneer

The French Dominican theologian Michel Donogue Chenu was died on 11 February shortly after reaching his 80th birthday. He was no stranger to controversy, his 70th birthday in 1955 being marked by the republication of his book, *St Thomas of Aquinas: the Scholastic*, which the Vatican put on the Index in 1943. It is difficult now to know what the fuss was all about. Le Saulchoir was the name of the Dominican theological college which had been in exile in Belgium since 1905, returning to France in 1938. It could claim some sort of

primacy. Chenu'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 "disincarnate theology". 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 Chenu when he said that a distinction must be drawn between the substance

THE TABLET 17 February 1990

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# Notebook

## The shadow of Auschwitz

Diplomatic relations between Poland and

tives of Poland, Israel and the Jewish international community.

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 Ambrosiak, is "to do justice to the tragedy of the Jewish

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

September 26 1989

# Glemp: Reflections On Auschwitz Feud

By Mary Battiata

Washington Post Service

**WARSAW** — Cardinal Jozef Glemp says that neither he nor the Polish Catholic Church he leads adequately understood the significance of the Auschwitz death camp as a symbol for Jewish people.

"Yes, there were some mistakes committed by the church," 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 resisting the relocation of a Catholic convent from Auschwitz offended many Jews and pushed 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 favored 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 that 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 primate's attempt at conciliation 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.

Reflecting a widely held opinion in this overwhelmingly Catholic country, Cardinal Glemp said the Carmelite nuns had settled at Auschwitz in 1984 "with good intentions" and that it was not easy for Polish Catholics to understand why the convent's presence was offensive to Jews. He said the church would have to explain in every Catholic parish the Jewish view that the only fitting memorial at a site where so many Jews were gassed and burned is emptiness and silence.

"That's why I would like to get a better understanding of Shoah," Cardinal Glemp said, using the Hebrew word for the Nazi extermination of Jews.

The cardinal said that he had had no direct contact with the Polish-born Pope John Paul II on the Auschwitz controversy, but that he had changed his mind about the agreement last week to Britain. During his visit there, he met with several prominent British Jews, including Sir Sigmund Sternberg, a philanthropist who heads the International Council of Christians and Jews.

"The Jews in London were really

## 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 taking of a controversy that began in 1985 with written protests by Belgian Jews.

Then, in a sermon on Aug. 26, Cardinal Glemp advised Jewish groups not to "dictate" demands that could not be met, or speak from "the position of a people raised above all others."

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.

See GLEMP, Page 6

# INFORM

I.C.C. J  
RSCB

Newsletter of the Reform Synagogues of Great Britain

Issue No. 63 January 1990

## A GOOD KNIGHT'S WORK

The sad story of the Convent at Auschwitz is, by now, all too well known. Carmelite Sisters 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 *Shoah* 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 1987 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 clerics, Dr. Antony Polonsky and Rabbi Tony Bayfield. It is believed that neither the 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 Catholics 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.

Sir Sigmund Sternberg O.St.J. KCSG JP  
Star House, Grafton Road,  
London NW5 4BD

Dear Sir Sigmund,

Warsaw 12th October 1990

Thank you very much for your letter, which I received on September 10.  
In reference to the letter I would like to forward the following information  
regarding the progress of the work of the Foundation Board  
for the reconstruction of the Jewish Centre.

1. The Board has received the report of the 15, 1990.
2. The work on the reconstruction of the building infrastructure  
has been completed, the two main wings have been connected.
3. Of the work planned previously the following 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 the winter it is planned: to complete the interior of the administrative  
building and two storeys 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

Prof. Jan Jozef Glomy  
Minister of Poland

[end]

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COMMISSION  
FOR RELIGIOUS RELATIONS WITH THE JEWS  
Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity

28.2.90

Prot.No. J 92/90/D

Dr Leon A. FELDMAN  
IJCIC

FAX 212-686-8673

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.

Il 19 febbraio 1990 si sono recati nel cantiere S. Em. Card. Franciszek Macharski, arcivescovo metropolita di Cracovia ed il Ministro Jacek Ambrosiak, capo della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, accompagnati dai rappresentanti del clero e del comune di Auschwitz.

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

« In questo momento il mio pensiero, il mio cuore si rivolge a Dio, a Dio Onnipotente e Misericordioso pregandolo ardentemente di voler benedire 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 ed il loro desiderio di pace... Che la giustizia, la pace e l'amore si irradiano da questo luogo. Gli uomini possano trovare qui le forze necessarie per superare tutto ciò che li divide — 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 zappa, l'inizio fisico della costruzione ».

Il ministro Ambrosiak ha sottolineato in complementarietà 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 ecclesiali nella sua costruzione. Ha messo in rilievo la portata mondiale di Auschwitz quale luogo dove il popolo ebreo ha avuto il maggior numero di vittime. Ha parlato anche della necessità di disporre diversamente alcune esposizioni del Museo e della prossima istituzione di un Consiglio Scientifico 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 Mondiale Ebraico, il sig. Edgar Bronfman, sottolineando che la presenza del rappresentante governativo alla cerimonia di Auschwitz esprime la presa di posizione del governo polacco. Ha espresso l'intenzione di eliminare ogni genere di attriti dai rapporti tra i polacchi e gli ebrei, per condannare poi ogni forma di antisemitismo, che bisogna combattere attraverso una giusta educazione.

STEFAN WILKANOWICZ

RADIOGIORNALE

MARTEDI' 20 FEBBRAIO 1990

## Le altre notizie - 3

- 4) - L'ARCIVESCOVO DI MADRID, ANGEL SUQUIA GOICOECHEA, RIELETTO 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 GOVERNO POLACCO

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 riunioni 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 antisemitica.

The Star Ledger  
2/20/90

# 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 of Krakow, whose archdiocese has jurisdiction over the site near the southern



Associated Press

Cardinal Franciszek Macharski breaks ground for a prayer center located just outside Auschwitz

Polish city of Oswiecim, presided over the ground-breaking ceremony.

"May justice, peace and love radiate from this place and let people find enough strength in this place to over-

Please turn to Page 5

# 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 Jacek 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 ground-breaking "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



Associated Press  
Polish Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, right, shakes hands with World Jewish Congress President Edgar M. Bronfman during a meeting in Warsaw

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.

JP 2/20/90

## Work begins on new home for nuns of Auschwitz

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

Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and World Jewish Congress president Edgar Bronfman, who met in Warsaw yesterday, said the start of construction was a major step towards ending the dispute over the convent and improving Poland's relations with Jews worldwide.

"We expressed the conviction that today's laying of the cornerstone for the Auschwitz centre marks the beginning of solving this problem," Mazowiecki said after meeting Bronfman.

At Auschwitz, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski and cabinet minister Jacek Ambroziak symbolically dug the earth, but there were no Jewish representatives among the 20 people at the ceremony.

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.

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TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1990

NO. 34

**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 Ausch-

witz 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 Lempkiewicz in Brussels contributed to this report.)

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## **La Pologne règle l'affaire du Carmel : la mémoire juive a été entendue**

• La première pierre vient d'être posée aujourd'hui sur le site du futur centre de prières où sera transféré le cimetière d'Auschwitz. J'ai de bonnes raisons de croire que c'est le vrai début de la fin de l'affaire du cimetière. Il n'y a plus de problèmes en suspens entre le peuple juif et la Pologne. • Voilà ce que nous a déclaré, dans une interview exclusive pour « Le Soir », prise lundi, par téléphone de Varsovie, le président du Congrès juif mondial, Edgar Bronfman, à l'issue de ses rencontres 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 informé M. Bronfman du début des travaux d'aménagement d'un centre de prières judéo-chrétien dans l'ancien camp de concentration d'Auschwitz. Les cimetières devaient être bientôt transférés dans ce centre. Rappelons que le report de ces travaux, prévus par un accord 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 catholiques, 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 mardi, à Gdansk, le président de Solidarité Lech Wałęsa, avant de se rendre en visite dans les camps d'Auschwitz et de Birkenau, près de Cracovie, où il doit « passer devant » le cimetière tant décrié.

• Pourquoi « passer devant » seulement; pourquoi n'avez-vous pas assisté à la cérémonie ?

• Notre présence à la pose de la première pierre n'a, à aucun moment, été envisagée. Conformément aux accords de Genève, le déplacement du cimetière et la construction du nouveau centre qui

va l'abriter, constituent une affaire intérieure de l'Eglise catholique.

• La pose de la première pierre annonce-t-elle la fin symbolique de l'affaire du cimetière d'Auschwitz qui a si longtemps empoisonné les relations judéo-catholiques et polono-juives ?

• Plus que symbolique. C'est début des travaux. Les dirigeants politiques polonais ont démontré une bonne foi et une bonne volonté exceptionnelles. C'est un nouveau pays.

Propos recueillis par  
 POL MATHIL  
 Suite en cinquième page



D'ici un an et demi, ces carmélites seront installées dans le futur centre de prières d'Auschwitz dont la première pierre a été posée lundi. (Photo : Le Soir.)

## 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 nous ont promis 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 prévue la fin des travaux ?

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

• Le carmel n'a certainement pas été l'unique sujet de vos conversations ?

• C'est exact. L'affaire du carmel étant entrée dans la phase de sa solution définitive, notre principal souci est le spectre et le danger de l'antisémitisme qui resurgit partout à l'Est.

• La démocratisation porte-t-elle l'antisémitisme ?

• Dans un certain sens, oui. L'antisémitisme existait avant, bien sûr, mais sa manifestation publique est en quelque sorte le prix de la démocratie. La liberté de parole et la création libre de différents courants politiques ont aussi facilité l'apparition de groupements extrémistes, surtout tout de droite évidemment.

• Pas seulement en Pologne...

• Bien sûr. Nous suivons très attentivement ce phénomène partout à l'Est. Pour ce qui concerne la Pologne, aucun de mes interlocuteurs n'a nié que, bien que le nombre de Juifs soit infime ici, un tel problème existe. Cela étant, M. Mazowiecki s'est montré absolument ferme et décidé à s'y opposer avec toute la fermeté de ses convictions et de ses moyens. L'ampleur de ce problème couvre en fait toute l'Europe de l'Est. Il faut partout instaurer les mécanismes dont la démocratie dispose pour faire face à ce fléau.

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

• Oui, l'antisémitisme est un instrument politique et une façon très traditionnelle d'exprimer le nationalisme, la xénophobie, aggravés, 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 les boucs émissaires désignés, et la situation économique est très difficile...

• Les autres organisations juives et même non juives ont pris une position très ferme à l'égard de certaines déclarations par trop nuancées du cardinal Glempski, primat de Pologne. Le primat est malade, mais n'avez-vous pas essayé de nouer un con-

tact quelconque avec son entourage ?

• Notre position sur ce plan est connue. Nous n'avons prévu dans l'agenda que nous avons proposé aux autorités polonaises aucun contact de ce genre. Nous avions 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 grave préoccupation. Il n'est pas nécessaire de trop épiloguer : nous avons beaucoup en commun ; les Polonais et les Juifs ont une expérience historique suffisante.

• L'affaire du carmel a été déclenchée par un groupe catholique en Belgique. L'alerte a été donnée par la communauté juive de Belgique aussi. Et elle a encore manifesté ce dimanche...

• Il faut évidemment rester vigilant. Mais j'espère que l'affaire du carmel approche de sa solution. Et puisque nous parlons de la Belgique, il ne faut pas, à cet égard, oublier le rôle essentiel et courageux qu'a joué, sur différents terrains, dans la recherche de cette solution, le cardinal Danneels, le primat de Belgique, auquel je voudrais, de Varsovie précédemment, rendre un profond hommage.

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

• Il faut l'espérer...

# Auschwitz : un coup de pelle solennel

Mgr 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, l'inauguration des travaux de terrassement sur le terrain du futur centre judéo-chrétien d'information, de rencontres, de prières et de dialogues qui abritera les « carmélites » d'Auschwitz, installées depuis 1984 sur le site de l'ancien camp nazi.

Le cardinal Franciszek Macharski, archevêque de Cracovie, s'y est rendu en personne pour procéder à la consécration des lieux. Le Premier ministre, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, avait lui-même l'intention d'assister à la cérémonie, a indiqué à « La Libre » son porte-parole, mais il a été retenu à Varsovie par d'autres obligations et s'est fait représenter à Oswiecim (Auschwitz en polonais) par son bras droit, le ministre Jacek Ambrosiak, chef de la chancellerie du Conseil.

**LA VISITE DE M. BRONFMAN.** Parmi les « obligations » de M. Mazowiecki figuraient, lundi matin, 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 d'antisémitisme et nous considérons que l'on peut l'éliminer grâce à l'éducation », a affirmé pour sa part le Premier ministre.

M. Bronfman a été reçu au même dépôt de la représentation à la cérémonie de lundi, qui ne consistait pas encore à la pose de la première pierre, car la parcelle à construire doit encore être aménagée au préalable. Aussi, M. Macharski et M. Ambrosiak ont-ils accompli chacun un geste symbolisant le début des travaux, en prélevant « les premières pelletes » de terre. Un panneau informant sur le détail des travaux a été installé à la même occasion en bordure de la parcelle.

De nombreux ecclésiastiques polonais, ainsi que des personnalités juives proches de l'Eglise, ont assisté à la cérémonie. En revanche, les Israélites de Pologne, avec le rabbin Menachem Joskowitz, n'y étaient pas représentés.

**DISTANT D'UN DEMI-KILOMETRE.** Œuvre d'un ar-

chitecte cracovien, Andrzej Bilski, le futur centre judéo-chrétien s'étalera sur 3,5 hectares et sera distant d'un demi-kilomètre de l'emplacement de l'ancien camp de la mort. Il sera composé de plusieurs bâtiments. Un « foyer de rencontres » abritera des salles d'expositions, de conférences et de cinéma, ainsi qu'une bibliothèque. Une « maison du pèlerin » pourra accueillir en une fois une centaine de personnes et

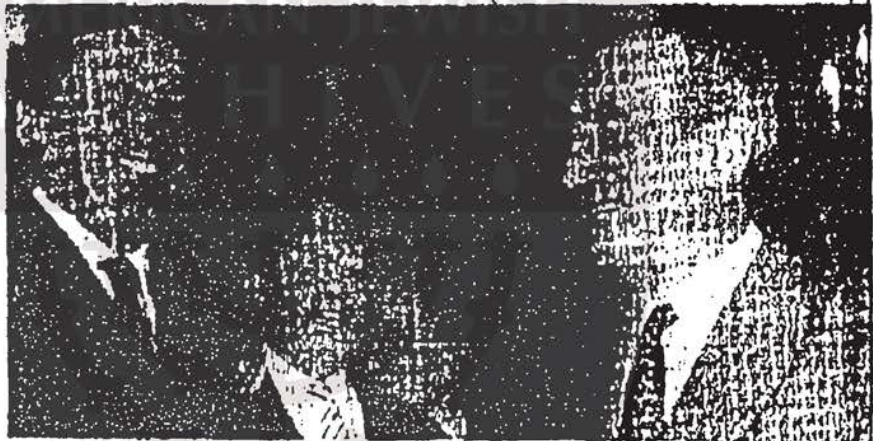
sera dotée de salons de réception et de restaurant. Le carmel proprement dit, où seront transférées les religieuses châtelines, occupera un bâtiment annexé, séparé par un mur du reste du centre.

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, a indiqué le père Marek Glowinski, à qui le cardinal Macharski avait

confié la direction d'une fondation chargée de gérer les travaux.

A 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 carmélites, dont la communauté juive réclame avec insistance le transfert, resteront à la lisière de l'ex-camp de la mort.

Jean ORVAL



Le Premier ministre polonais Tadeusz Mazowiecki salue le président du Congrès juif mondial, Edgar Bronfman: « Il n'y a plus de problème aujourd'hui entre les juifs et la Pologne. » (Photo EPA)

La Libre Belgique  
mardi 20 février 1990

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# Carmel d'Auschwitz: la première pierre de l'apaisement

Alors qu'un millier de personnes manifestaient sous les parapluies, dimanche matin, dans les rues de Bruxelles, pour réclamer le départ des carmélites installées depuis 1984 à l'intérieur de l'ancien camp de la mort d'Auschwitz, on apprenait que les premiers travaux d'aménagement du centre de prières, où doivent être transférées ces carmélites, commencent 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'informations, d'études, de dialogue et de prières sera bâti à 500 mètres

en dehors du site du camp. Il abritera un nouveau couvent qui recevra les carmélites déchaussées actuellement installées dans un bâtiment de l'ancien camp de la mort.

Ce centre, d'une superficie de 2,5 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<sup>r</sup> Macharski et dirigée par le P. Mark Olowins, de la curie 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.

Le déplacement des carmélites

et la construction du Centre, dont les plans sont l'œuvre d'un architecte de Cracovie, Andrzej Bilski, étaient prévus par les accords de Genève conclus voici deux ans — exactement le 22 fé-

vrier 1987 — entre des représentants de l'Eglise catholique et de la communauté juive internationale. Aux termes de cet accord, les religieuses polonaises auraient dû quitter les lieux le 22 février de l'année dernière au plus tard. La partie catholique avait par la suite repoussé ce délai au 22 juillet 1989.

L'Eglise polonaise, avec au premier rang le cardinal-primat de Pologne, M<sup>r</sup> 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 iraient s'installer les carmélites.

Si les déclarations du Congrès juif mondial et 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. (AFP.)



Un millier de personnes ont manifesté dimanche à Bruxelles en criant à l'Eglise : « Ne mettez pas une croix sur notre mémoire ». Appel entendu ? (Photo : Jacky GOESSENS.)

Le centre de prières au

l'abri des manifestations violentes

Se cont de l'envoi de 20.000 le re

AUSCHWITZ.

## Le Congrès juif mondial confirme

Un millier de personnes, juives et catholiques, ont manifesté dimanche à Bruxelles pour réclamer le départ des carmélites de l'ancien camp de concentration d'Auschwitz. Les manifestants ont exigé que l'Eglise catholique respecte ses engagements et organise au plus tôt le départ des religieuses.

A New York, M. Elan Steinberg, directeur exécutif du Congrès juif mondial, a confirmé qu'un accord était intervenu à propos du carmel d'Auschwitz. La construction d'un centre plurireligieux commencera ce lundi.

JEWISH

ARCHIVES

Vers L'Avenir

13-2-90

## Société

# 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 devaient dû quitter le site de l'ancien camp de concentration voici un an déjà.

Les derniers jours, les événements se sont succédés. Et ce lundi matin, la première pierre du futur carmel juif sera posée, à l'initiative du vaup. « 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 un comité d'action pour le respect de la parole donnée épelaient donc leur volonté que les promesses négociées à Genève, en 1986 et 1987, soient tenues (voir éditions de 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, si

symbolique pour la communauté juive. Les carmélites occupent, depuis lors, un bâtiment autrefois utilisé pour stocker le Zyklon-B, gaz dont se servaient les nazis dans les chambres à gaz.

C'est un peu par hasard — en lisant un prospectus appelant à la récolte de fonds pour le carmel — que les Juifs de Belgique ont été les premiers à demander le départ de ce couvent. Par la suite, les Belges ont poursuivi le combat et se sont

retrouvés parmi les signataires des accords entre les catholiques et les juifs, le 22 février 1987 à Genève.

### A 500 mètres du camp

Les accords prévoyaient que les Carmélites déménagent le 22 février 1988 au plus tard... mais cela n'a pas été le cas. D'ailleurs, l'Eglise polonaise, avec en tête le primate de Pologne, Mgr Glemp, a voulu négocier. Le tollé a été grand, au sein du monde juif, mais aussi parmi les catholiques.

Fin de semaine, on a d'abord enregistré, via un communiqué du Congrès juif mondial diffusé à New York, l'annonce que le conflit était réglé. Le Premier ministre polonais Tadeusz Mazowiecki devait rencontrer lundi à Varsovie le président du CJM, Edgar Bronfman, et lui annoncer le

début immédiat des travaux. Jusqu'à maintenant.

Ensuite, l'agence de presse polonaise confirmait que le début des travaux était imminent. Se fondant sur une déclaration d'un proche collaborateur du cardinal Franciszek Macharski, archevêque de Cracovie, l'agence affirmait que le « Centre International d'Informations, d'Etudes, de Dialogue et de Prières sera bâti à 500 mètres en dehors du site du camp et abritera un nouveau couvent qui recevra les Carmélites ».

Le Centre, d'une superficie de 3,5 hectares, comprendra aussi un foyer de rencontres avec salons pour des expositions, des conférences et une salle de cinéma ainsi qu'une maison du pèlerin avec hôtel et restaurant pour cent personnes, précisait l'agence.

Ces nouvelles, si elles jouissaient les Juifs de Belgique, ne les rassurent complètement. Dimanche matin, avec les non-juifs ont épousé leur cause étaient un petit millier à manifester, entre la place Palais de Justice et l'église du Couvent, en la présence du COOJP, Lazard, et, en clôture, soul que la pose de la première pierre était certes un moment encourageant, mais que les signataires de la déclaration attendaient sur la... dernière pierre : « une question de délai, de volonté politique, les travaux pourraient durer un an, deux ans, cinq ans, le lancement des travaux nous démobilitera pour nous a-t-il dit, dimanche soir, par téléphone.

# Work on new convent to start near Auschwitz

*Harold George 2/19/90*

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 Po-

land's shattered economy, said Marek 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 Glowina said. The archdiocese of Krakow appointed Glowina 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.

# Time and elements erode Holocaust museum

## Experts seek to preserve evidence of death camp horror in Poland

OSWIECIM, Poland (AP)—If the masses of human hair turn matted and the piles of inmates' shoes fall apart, museum conservators wonder how future generations will know the horror of the Auschwitz concentration camp.

Alarmed by the worsening condition of the barracks, gas chambers, crematoria and archives of victims' belongings, a team of Western specialists has volunteered to map out a preservation effort that could cost up to \$40 million.

The Culture Ministry of the new non-Communist Polish government also has formed a commission to change the 35-year-old museum exhibition, which highlights the Soviet army's liberation of the camp but mentions the Holocaust only in passing.

"If nothing is done, in 10 to 20 years, this site will be practically nonexistent," said Frank Reiss, vice president of the New York-based Ronald S. Lauder Foundation. "It is falling apart. It is in urgent need of repair."

The foundation struck an agreement with the government-run museum to provide technical advice and raise funds for the preservation. It sent a team of experts, including the chief conservator from New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, to assess the damage in December.

"The tens of thousands of pairs of shoes, if you touch them, they fall to dust," Reiss said. "The ruins of the gas chambers, they have to be preserved, but as ruins, not put back together Hollywood-style."

Nazi Germany built the Auschwitz concentration camp and the adjacent Birkenau death camp in southern Poland to carry out Adolf Hitler's "Final Solution." Estimates of the number of people killed there range to 4 million, mostly Jews from across Europe. Victims also included Gypsies, homosexuals and political prisoners.

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 a separate, less-visited exhibit supported by foreign Jewish groups to remind visitors that the camp existed mainly to exterminate Jews.

The site is officially known as a "Monument to the Martyrdom of the Polish and Other Nations." The official guidebook describes the concentration camps as the main Nazi weapon against "conquered people, mainly Slavs, above all the Polish nation and the peoples of the U.S.S.R., as well as Jews and other persons considered to be such."

Poland's new government is ready to tackle such sensitive issues. Pro-Solidarity Culture Minister Izabella

Cywinska has named an independent Auschwitz commission, including museum experts and religious experts.

"The commission is to see whether the exhibition fully reflects the historical truth and whether it speaks to younger generations," said Krystyna Marszalek-Mlynarczyk, the vice minister leading the panel.

Commissioners found many problems with the exhibit commentary on a recent inspection.

"There is a phrase: 'All Poles spontaneously helped Jews.' Every word of this phrase could be questioned," said Franciszek Cernka, 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 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-Mlynarczyk 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 \$35,000.

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.

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## 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.

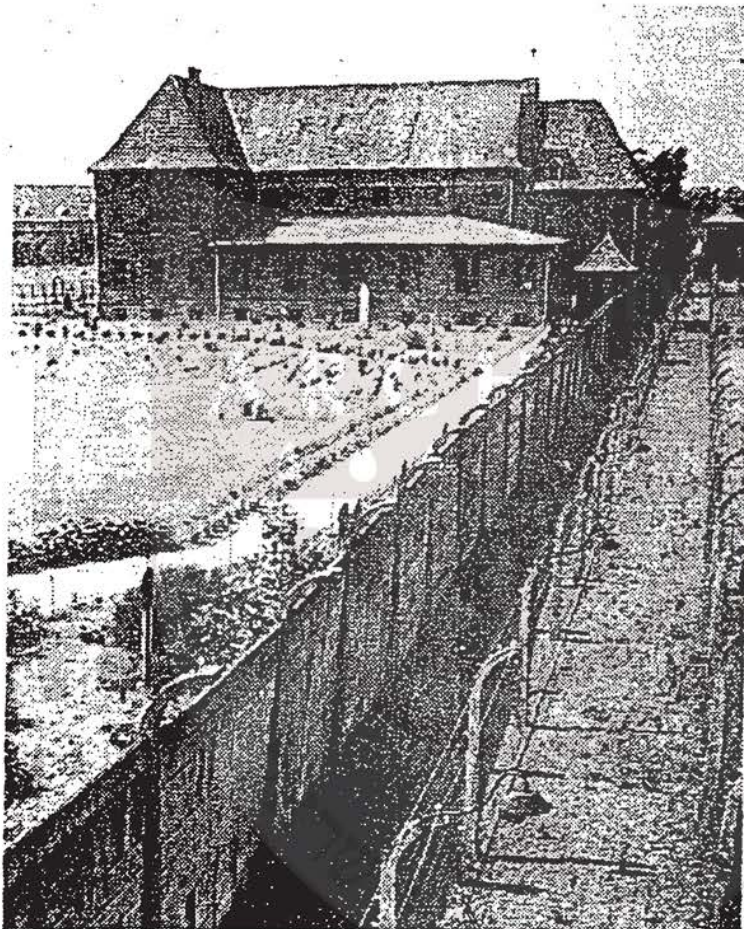
According to press reports in the West, Jaroslaw Szczepanski, a spokesman for the Polish government, said the start of the construction was directly linked to the re-establishment of diplomatic ties between Poland and Israel, which was scheduled to take place Feb. 27. "The government attaches great significance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



Saba / Filip Horvat

The Carmelite convent at the Auschwitz death camp in Poland is to be moved. An interfaith center will be built in its place.

## Nuns Are to Quit Site at Auschwitz

By The Associated Press

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.

# WORLD JEWISH CONGRESS

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## FAX TRANSMISSION

Total pages (including cover page) ..... 1 .....

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

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

From: ..... Gerhart M. Riegner .....

Subject: Fumagalli informed me this morning that he spoke to  
Wilkanowicz, .... The ceremony of inauguration will take place on  
February 19 in the presence of Macharski 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. 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 of people died there, I'm sure, with prayers."

Parliament member Onyszkiewicz said the government too, "would like to see the convent 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 much in Poland's past, particularly during World War II, that Poland could not be proud of.

At the same time, he stressed that 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 "has 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 the interfaith center for information meetings and prayer will start "in the coming weeks," the paper said.

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 last year by Culture Minister Izabella Cywinska, under the auspices of Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Poland's first non-Communist prime minister in more than four decades.

EGLISE CATHOLIQUE  
CONFERENCE DES EVEQUES DE FRANCE  
SECRETARIAT GENERAL  
INFORMATION - COMMUNICATION  
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POUR LE CHEF DE L'INFORMATION RELIGIEUSE OU MONSIEUR 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 SECRETAIRE 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  
TRAVAUX DE CONSTRUCTION DU CENTRE D'INFORMATION, D'ETUDE ET DE PRIERE  
ET DU NOUVEAU CARMEL SUR LE TERRAIN ACQUIS DANS LA COMMUNE  
D'OSWIECIM. CELA CONFORMEMENT 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  
JUDAISME : 2, BIS QUAI DES CELESTINS 75004 PARIS

MGR GASTON POULAIN  
EVEQUE DE PERIGUEUX

PRESIDENT DU COMITE  
EPISCOPAL POUR LES  
RELATIONS AVEC LE  
JUDAISME

PERE JEAN DUJARDIN

SECRETAIRE DU COMITE  
EPISCOPAL POUR LES  
RELATIONS AVEC LE  
JUDAISME

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Bologne-Carmel

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 être installés les carmélites depuis 1984 à l'intérieur de l'ancien camp de concentration nazi d'Auschwitz, commenceront "dans la semaine qui vient", indique un communiqué du comité épiscopal pour les relations avec le judaïsme.

Selon Mgr Gaston Poulain et le père Jean Dujardin, respectivement président et secrétaire de ce comité épiscopal, "les travaux de construction d'un centre d'information, d'étude et de prière et du nouveau carmel" seront entrepris sur "le terrain acquis dans la commune d'Oswiecim (ndlr : Auschwitz en polonais). Cela conformément à l'accord de Genève du 22 février 1987", précise le communiqué.

Selon cet accord, signé entre des responsables catholiques et juifs, les carmélites auraient dû quitter leur couvent (situé dans l'ancien camp de concentration reconnu par l'UNESCO comme appartenant au patrimoine mondial), le 22 février 1989 au plus tard. La partie catholique avait par la suite repoussé ce délai au 22 juillet 1989.

Les religieuses n'ayant toujours pas quitté les lieux à cette date, les relations judéo-catholiques s'étaient détériorées, d'autant plus que l'épiscopat polonais avait demandé à la fin de l'été 1989 une "renégociation" des accords.

Me Théo Klein, qui conduisait au nom de la communauté juive les discussions avec les catholiques, avait demandé le "gel" des relations entre les deux communautés. La présence de ces religieuses sur le site de l'ancien camp d'extermination nazi blesse la sensibilité des juifs pour qui Auschwitz représente le symbole de la Shoah.

La polémique n'avait pris fin qu'avec l'intervention du Vatican, le 19 septembre, qui avait déclaré accueillir "positivement" la construction d'un centre de prières où iraient s'installer les carmélites.

Dans leur communiqué, Mgr Poulain et le père Dujardin précisent que "pour permettre" la construction du centre, "une souscription est lancée" et que les fonds, même les plus modestes, sont attendus.

Les dons seront reversés à la Fondation créée à la fin du mois de décembre par le cardinal Franciszek Macharski, archevêque de Cracovie, chargée de réunir les fonds nécessaires à la construction du Centre, 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.  
--More--

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.

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--More--

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--More--

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Some work has already begun and construction of the interfaith center for information, meetings and prayer will start "in the coming weeks," the paper said.

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 Cywinska, 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

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Proprietary to the United Press International 1990

February 5, 1990, Monday, BC cycle

SECTION: International

LENGTH: 301 words

HEADLINE: Catholics move to resolve dispute over Auschwitz monastery

TELETYPE: WARSAW, Poland

KEYWORD: POLAND

BODY:

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 foundation 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' quarters.

Proprietary to the United Press International, February 5, 1990

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 Geneva 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 prayers being said there by other religious groups.

The 14 nuns are living in a church used by the Nazis during the war to store Zyklon-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 workers and the head of the Polish church, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, criticized the incident 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 declared that the nuns would be moved after all.

Poland

## 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

that it was the wrong season for construction work. He hoped for a "symbolic gesture", such as the laying of the foundation stone, as a sign that work was really under way.

Romania

## News in brief



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 ~~be~~ been speaking with ~~Polish~~ 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~~ 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~~ 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.