

Vatican, East Germany In 'High Level' Talks

Rome (RNS) — High level talks have been held in Rome between representatives of the Vatican and the government of East Germany.

Werner Lamberz, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist party in the German Democratic Republic (DDR), told newsmen on Jan. 30 that "in the last few days" he had had "lengthy talks" with Archbishop Agostino Casaroli, secretary of the Council for Public Affairs of the Church.

Lamberz said the talks were "very open and cordial on matters of common interest."

Later, Vatican press officer Federico Alessandrini said he believed the talks constituted "the first direct meeting between

high ranking representatives of the Holy See and the DDR." He said the discussions had allowed for "a useful exchange of information," but declined to give any further details.

Lamberz is the leader of a 16-member East German Communist Party delegation, which completed an eight-day visit to Italy on Jan. 30, as guests of the Italian Communist party.

In the last two years there have been reciprocal efforts on the part of the Vatican and the governments of Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union to reach varying levels of detente.

Italian Radio broadcasts speculated that among matters discussed by Lamberz and Arch-

bishop Casaroli was "the problem of Roman Catholic dioceses in East Germany, where the government wants pre-war diocesan boundaries abolished and adapted to present state frontiers."

The broadcasts pointed out that views "supporting these desires" have already been expressed "unofficially" in the East German Communist press.

Italian Radio speculated further that the Vatican is "apparently willing" to make adjustments, but "before making any decisions, wants to learn more about — and obtain concessions on — freedom of worship and religious education" in East Germany, where Catholics constitute about 10 per cent of the population.

Vatican, Cyprus Set Up Relations

Nicosia, Cyprus (RNS) — Cyprus and the Vatican will establish full diplomatic relations, according to a terse announcement here.

The announcement, reported by Cyprus Radio, said the Holy See and the government of Cyprus had agreed to set up relations "at the ambassadorial

level" in the near future. The report gave no further details.

The president of the island republic, Archbishop Makarios, is also head of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus. About 80 per cent of the island's population of 640,000 are Orthodox. Roman Catholics number about 6,800.

Pope Paul

Unity is 'Gift of God'

Rome — (RNS) — Pope Paul, in an observance marking the close of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity (Jan. 18-25), praised the Lord for what "progress" had been made in ecumenism, and prayed for the divine gift of "complete unity" among all faithful followers of Jesus Christ.

In a homily, at a "Celebration of the Word" prayer service held in the church of Santa Maria in Valicella, central Rome, the Pope emphasized the absolute "impossibility" of achieving an "integral unity" of Christians "through human power alone."

"Unity is a very difficult thing to achieve," he said. "It calls for constant, unremitting and ardent prayer. It is the gift of God."

Referring briefly to the "difficulties" that have stood in the way of Christian unity, the pontiff said that the "historic acci-

dents which have divided the Church over the centuries" can be seen today, in the light of faith, "as intolerable and indefensible in the face of the divine plan which envisions a unity of one flock and one shepherd."

Pope Paul went on to remark that to overcome the historical obstacles to unity there is profound need for a changed mentality and "an inner spiritual renewal, neither of which can be realized "without supernatural intervention, without divine help."

"Thus we see," he reiterated, "the need for prayer. Christian unity must descend as a gift from God."

At the close of his homily, the pontiff announced that Coptic Orthodox Patriarch Shenuda II of Alexandria will pay a visit to the Vatican next spring.

Rabbi Sees No Threat In Key 73

New York (RNS) — An Orthodox rabbi who is an executive of a cooperative Jewish agency has taken other Jewish leaders to task for criticizing Key 73, the cooperative Christian evangelism effort.

Rabbi Henry Siegman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, suggested that what he described as the "alarmist view of Key 73" is "inimical to the real interests of religious Jewry."

The clergyman, whose organization is an umbrella group of Reform, Conservative and some Orthodox bodies, declared that "whether or not Christianity confers a salvific status on Judaism is clearly a Christian theological issue."

In an article prepared for a forthcoming issue of Congress Bi-Weekly, published by the American Jewish Congress, Rabbi Siegman said:

"A Christian understanding of Judaism can emerge only out of the Christian faith experience. There is, therefore, a certain irrelevance to suggestions made by Jews to Christians concerning the status of Judaism in Christian faith for no Jew can speak out of the Christian faith experience."

The rabbi commented that he personally finds Key 73 "unappealing" because of its "emphasis on sin, the promise of easy salvation, its promotional and manipulative approach," none of which, he said, "is calculated to inspire confidence in the depth of its spirituality."

Rabbi Siegman added, however, that he did not believe that "any significant number of Jews will be won over to Christianity by Key 73."

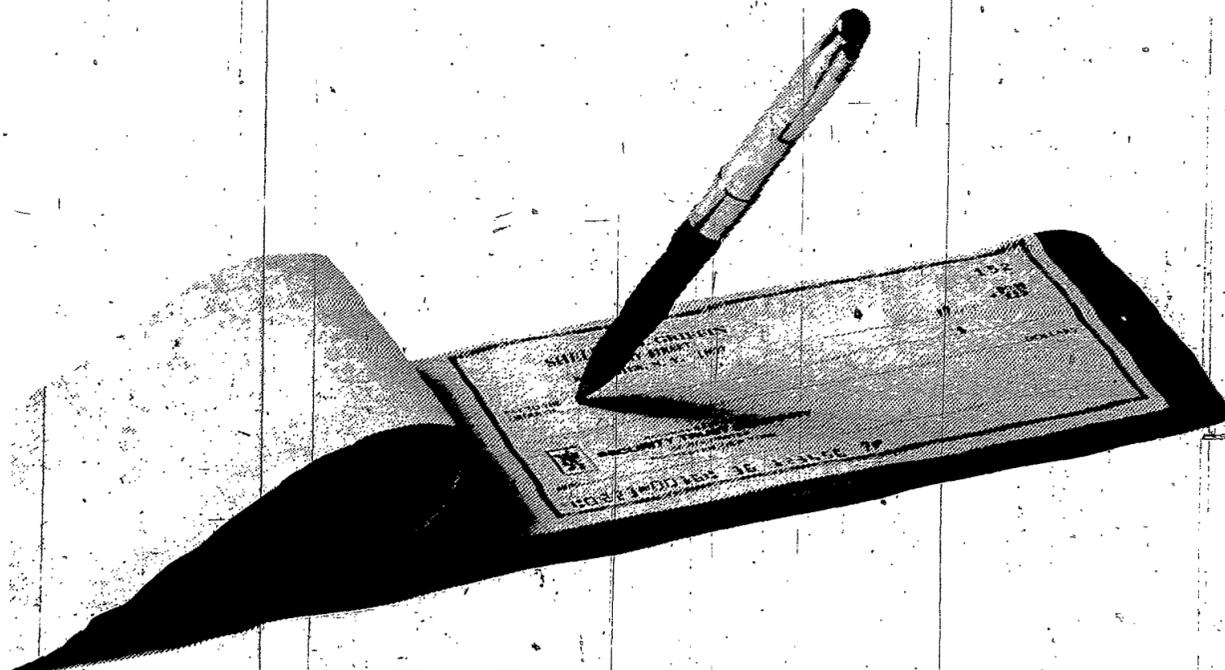
"Those few who will convert," he said, "will do so because of our own failures, because we have allowed Jewish life to become so secularized, so emptied of transcendent meaning, that some of our children will turn to Christianity and to other faiths in order to fill a terrible spiritual void."

St. Ann Pupils In County Band

Hornell — Two pupils at St. Ann's School have been selected to play in the Steuben County 6th Grade All-County Band as a result of auditions held recently in Avoca. They are Peggy Dunning, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Dunning, and Anthony Madau, son of Mr. and Mrs. Antonio Madau. Both young musicians play the cornet and are members of the St. Ann's Band directed by Mrs. Nathan Hardy.

The All-County Band, composed of 86 students from 18 area schools, will be directed by Robert Parada of Hornell in a concert March 3 at the Hammondsport Central School.

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