

# Letter confirms promise to build Auschwitz center

WARSAW, Poland (CNS) — Cardinal Jozef Glemp of Gniezno and Warsaw has confirmed in a letter to a Jewish group that the Catholic Church would build a prayer center intended to settle a dispute over a convent at the former Nazi death camp of Auschwitz.

The Nissenbaum Foundation, which restores Jewish cemeteries and synagogues in Poland, quoted Cardinal Glemp Sept. 29 as saying that Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Krakow would take charge of building the center.

The center is intended to house 14 Carmelite nuns now residing at the Auschwitz convent, which has caused an international conflict between the Catholic Church and Jews.

The convent is in an old theater just outside the camp fence, and Jews wanted it moved to keep Auschwitz as a silent tribute to the 4 million people, most of them Jews, who were killed there by the Germans during World War II.

European Catholic and Jewish leaders — including Cardinal Macharski — agreed in

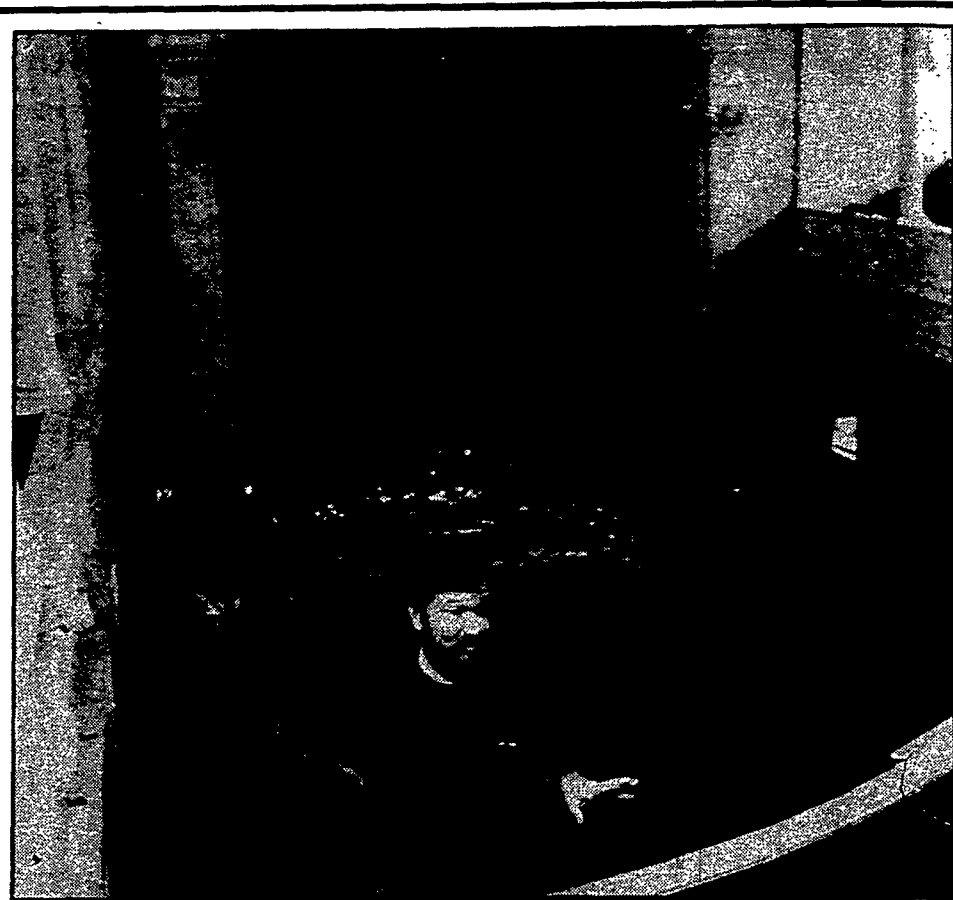
1987 to move the nuns from the convent, but in August the Krakow cardinal said he had scrapped plans to build the center because of "offensive aggression" against the convent.

Cardinal Macharski, whose diocese includes the former death camp, said Sept. 24 that backing from the Vatican and the Polish government had helped solve the controversy.

The Nissenbaum Foundation quoted Cardinal Glemp's letter as saying: "Currently, especially after the Holy See's statement, Cardinal Macharski of Krakow will undertake the building of the center for information, meetings, education and prayer."

Cardinal Glemp wrote to the foundation to offer his greetings for the Jewish New Year. He met the foundation's president, Zygmunt Nissenbaum, on Sept. 15.

In August, Cardinal Glemp's remarks about Jews and the convent drew criticism from Catholic and Jewish leaders worldwide. Some termed his remarks anti-Semitic.



Nelson W. Koscheski, Jr., dean of The Cathedral of St. Luke and St. Paul surveys the damage after Hurricane Hugo severely damaged the Charleston, South Carolina building.

AP Wide World Photo

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