

Touring cardinal meets with Jewish leaders

By Tracy Early
Catholic News Service

NEW YORK — Cardinal Jozef Glemp of Warsaw and Gniezno, Poland, met with key Jewish leaders in New York Oct. 6, saying "these vital discussions" would continue "in Warsaw in early 1992."

The meeting, arranged by Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York and held at his residence, took place after the two cardinals concelebrated Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral. They later reviewed the annual Pulaski Parade from the cathedral steps.

A Mass at a Manhattan Polish parish, St. Stanislaus, completed Cardinal Glemp's last full day of a U.S. visit that began Sept. 19. On Oct. 7, he was scheduled to visit the United Nations and the Vatican's U.N. mission before leaving for Rome.

Jewish leaders who attended the meeting said they welcomed Cardinal O'Connor's initiative in arranging the event. The leaders and Cardinal Glemp agreed to cooperate on a program including:

- "Implementation of the invitation to go to Poland to teach in the universities, academies and faculties of Catholic institutions about Jewish/Polish history, contribution of Jews to Polish culture and basic Jewish values.

- "The establishment of concrete programs for the coming year to implement the pastoral letter of Jan. 20, which called for the promotion of positive Polish-Jewish relationships. The letter also responded to Cardinal Glemp's promise

that he will do everything in his power to fight anti-Semitism in Poland.

- "Work to overcome stereotypes of Jews, Catholics and Poles and implement a general process of dialogue."

Afterward, Rabbi Jack Bemporad, chairman of the interreligious affairs committee of the Synagogue Council of America, told reporters that Cardinal O'Connor called on Cardinal Glemp to use the influence of the Polish church for Vatican diplomatic relations with Israel. "Cardinal Glemp was very responsive to that," the rabbi said.

He also commended Cardinal O'Connor for making the point to Cardinal Glemp that — although Polish Catholics suffered under the Nazis — there was a qualitative difference between their experience and that of the Jews.

Rabbi Leon Klenicki of the Anti-Defamation League, who refused to attend an earlier meeting with Cardinal Glemp, attended the meeting in New York. He said later he came because of Cardinal O'Connor's request and because Baltimore Archbishop William H. Keeler, who chairs the bishops' committee for Jewish relations, had called to express his concern.

Rabbi Klenicki, however, declined to join the 10 who signed the Jewish statement. "I found the statement by Cardinal Glemp very, very general, and he didn't commit himself to anything," the rabbi said.

Judith Banki, associate director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee and the only woman among

the Jewish participants, said the atmosphere in the meeting was "polite," the discussions "frank" and the results "constructive."

She said she told Cardinal Glemp that her grandfather came to the United States from Warsaw with "bitter memories" of anti-Semitism, and she wished to honor his memory by working for reconciliation.

Participants in the meeting, she said, could hear the sound of Jewish protesters outside led by Rabbi Avraham Weiss of the Hebrew Institute in the Bronx. Participants in the meeting took some risk of censure by their constituencies, she said, but will be vindicated if the projected programs are carried out.

A demonstration against the Jewish demonstrators was conducted by a small group of New Jersey members of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. They held signs saying "Stop Catholic Bashing" and "Stand Up to Our Enemies."

A third sidewalk demonstration was organized by a few abortion-rights protesters who gathered because it also was Respect Life Sunday, a theme emphasized in Car-

dinal O'Connor's homily.

In the homily, Cardinal O'Connor also spoke about the controversy over Cardinal Glemp. Despite some things said "in other circumstances," an apparent allusion to statements in Poland that offended Jews, Cardinal Glemp has reached out "far more frequently than he has been given credit for," the New York cardinal said.

He went on to commend Cardinal Glemp for statements of "deep regret" he has made in his U.S. visit for "any misunderstandings of his own or misunderstandings of others."

Cardinal O'Connor also expressed his appreciation for the "generous" response of Jewish leaders who were prepared "to treat the past as past" and "extended their friendship."

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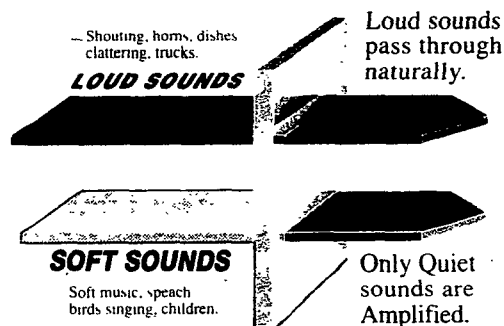


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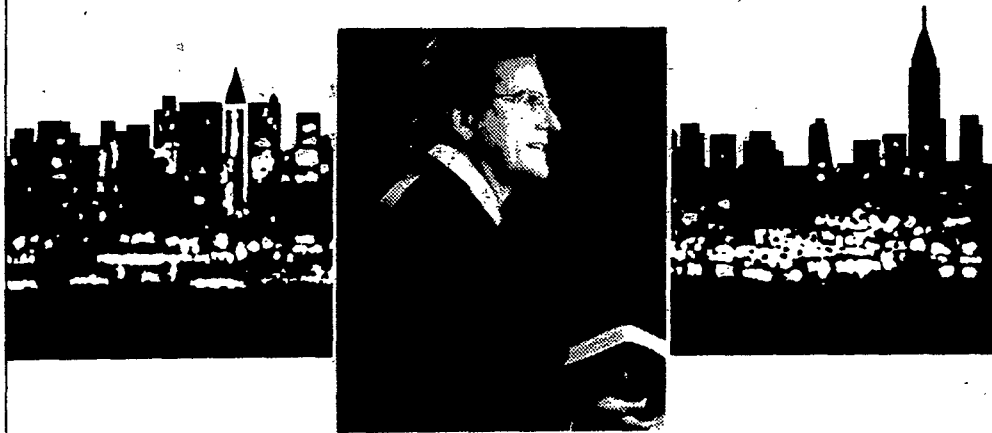
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