

# Pope hopes to visit Sarajevo on trip

By Felix Corley  
Catholic News Service

LONDON — Pope John Paul II's visit to the former Yugoslavia could prove one of the most sensitive of his recent foreign pilgrimages.

The pope has long agonized over the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina and believes his presence in the besieged capital, Sarajevo, could do much to bring a greater chance of peace.

The pope had hoped to make a balanced visit, stopping in Sarajevo; Belgrade, Yugoslavia; and Zagreb, Croatia.

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls said Aug. 3 that current plans call for a September trip to Zagreb and that a team of papal organizers was investigating the possibility of a trip to Sarajevo.

However, although Catholic and Serbian Orthodox church officials talked, no invitation to Belgrade was forthcoming.

A Yugoslav diplomat said the Serbian government did not invite the pope because the Serbian church did not invite

him.

"This is a matter for churches," he said. "If the Serbian church invited him, the Yugoslav government would allow him to visit."

Asked if the Yugoslav government had any comment about the pope's plans to visit Croatia and Bosnia, the diplomat said: "These are independent states, so our government has no objection to the visit. It is up to them."

The Serbian church's refusal to issue an invitation will cause disappointment at the Vatican. Despite the fact that Serbian propaganda demonizes him, the pope has been careful not to identify the Catholic Church solely with the sufferings of the Croats, who are predominantly Catholic. In addition to speaking of the suffering of Bosnian Muslims, the pope has referred to the suffering the sanctions are causing the population of Yugoslavia.

The pope has sought to make reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox churches a priority. The Bosnian conflict has dramatically worsened relations, already tense over Orthodox

accusations of Catholic proselytism in Eastern Europe.

Because of the situation, a visit to traditionally Catholic Croatia and its capital of Zagreb would test the pope's ability to handle delicate matters. He would want to distance himself from the more extreme wing of Croatian nationalism, which is strongly tinged with echoes of the World War II Nazi puppet regime in Zagreb.

The war 50 years ago saw the same type of bloody ethnic and political conflict between the same groups who now are warring with each other in the Balkans. Hundreds of thousands of Serbian Orthodox were killed by the Croatian Ustasa regime, as today thousands of Muslims and Croats have died at the hands of extreme nationalist Serbs.

If the visit to Sarajevo gets the go-ahead, the pope would be the latest in a stream of political leaders, pop stars and religious leaders to visit the war-torn city.

Felix Corley writes about Eastern Europe for Catholic News Service.

## Prelate to pro-lifers: 'Kill me, not abortionists'

NEW YORK — "If anyone has an urge to kill an abortionist, let him kill me instead," Cardinal John J. O'Connor of New York said Aug. 4. "That's about as clearly as I can renounce such madness," he said. He made his comments in his weekly column in his archdiocesan newspaper, *Catholic New York*, amid a new national debate over violence and promotion of violence by extremist opponents of abortion. The debate was provoked by the July 29 murder of Dr. John B. Britton and his escort, James H. Barrett, at The Ladies Center, an abortion clinic in Pensacola, Fla. Paul Hill has been charged with murder and attempted murder.

## Knights oppose reform with abortion coverage

PITTSBURGH — Abortion coverage in health-care reform would "grossly violate the consciences of millions of Americans," said the Knights of Columbus in a resolution drafted during their international convention. "Abortion is not health care but the destruction of human life," said the resolution adopted at the close of the Aug. 2-4 convention in Pittsburgh, attended by about 2,000 members of the Knights of Columbus.

## Law seeks to end killing of female fetuses in India

NEW DELHI, India — Indian government and church figures said that a new ban on gender testing is a good step, but not likely to end the widespread practice of aborting female fetuses by families prejudiced toward having male children. Federal deputy health and family welfare minister Paban Singh Ghatowar said he introduced the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Regulation and Prevention of Misuse bill to curb female feticide, UCA News, a Thailand-based Asia church news agency, reported. The measure passed July 26. Ghatowar called the killing of female fetuses a great social evil which is widening the country's gender gap. India's national ratio is 929 females to 1,000 males.

Compiled from Catholic News Service reports.

## Waterloo priest elected to head order of oblates

FOKENFELD, Germany (CNS) — Father Lewis Fiorelli, a native of Waterloo and a member of the Wilmington-Philadelphia province of the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales, was elected superior general of the order Aug. 2.

His election took place during the Oblates' general chapter in Fokenfeld.

Born March 10, 1942, in Waterloo, Father Fiorelli had worked since 1986 as religious in charge of the Deshairs House in Washington, teacher at the De Sales Hall School of Theology in Hyattsville, Md., and Salesian spiritual adviser to the Wilmington/Philadelphia province of the Oblates.

He also taught at the Virginia Theological Seminary, Wesley Theological Seminary University and the Allentown (Pa.) College of St. Francis de Sales.

He entered the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales in 1960 and was ordained a priest on Sept. 12, 1970, at St. Mary's Church in Waterloo.

There are about 900 Oblates of St. Francis de Sales in the world, including 500 in the United States. Its international headquarters are in Rome.

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