

Pope To Visit Rome Synagogue

ROME (WMS) — The Jewish community has warmly welcomed the Vatican's announcement that Pope John Paul II will visit Rome's main synagogue next month.

But while this is viewed as a "historic gesture" which may be the first Papal visit ever to a Jewish house of worship, the feeling among Jewish leaders is that it will be up to the Pontiff whether the occasion is merely "symbolic or contributes substantively to Catholic-Jewish relations."

"It could be a fantastic step forward," said Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, "or it could be a perpetuation of ambiguities." She was referring to certain fundamental issues that remain unresolved after more than 20 years of Vatican-Jewish dialogue that began after Vatican Council II in 1965.

The Jewish community expressed its "satisfaction at the decision of Pope John Paul II to visit the

synagogue of Rome," adding that "this will mark an important step in the direction of an ever more rewarding dialogue."

The Rome synagogue was the scene of a traumatic event in October 1982 when worshippers were attacked by Arab terrorists with machineguns and grenades. A two-year-old boy, Stefano Tache, was killed and 34 persons were wounded.

More than a year earlier, on February 9, 1981, the spiritual leader of the synagogue, Rome's Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff, met with the Pope at a church adjacent to the old Jewish ghetto, about 100 yards from the synagogue. From that time on, a Papal visit to the synagogue itself seemed more and more in the realm of possibility, awaiting only the appropriate "conditions."

Zevi stressed in her remarks that the conditions could never have materialized but for the changes in Catholic-Jewish relations engendered by

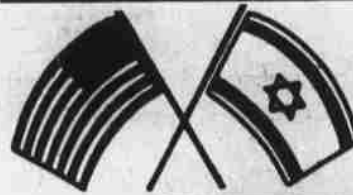
Vatican II. Yet there is disappointment in Jewish circles here and abroad that the changes have not progressed further than they have. One issue that rankles Jews is the Vatican's persistent refusal to extend formal recognition to the State of Israel. This was one of the main criticisms vented by a Jewish ecumenical group in June, 1985 over a just published Vatican document called "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching the Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church."

According to the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations (IJCIC), the Notes fail to acknowledge the religious significance of Israel to the Jewish people and refer only briefly and superficially to the Holocaust. The IJCIC called them a retrogression from the historic "Nostra Aetate" (Our Times) which emerged from Vatican Council II in 1964 and the December 1, 1974 "Guidelines and

suggestions for the Application of the Declaration Nostra Aetate."

A Papal visit to the synagogue has been long considered a necessary "next step" in the interreligious dialogue, by Jews and by enlightened Christians. But it was never openly solicited by Rome's Jewish community.

The Jewish community, which has existed for 2,000 years and survived more than a millenia under the "shadow" of the Vatican, in good times and bad, has always felt itself to be the "wronged party." It therefore considered it inappropriate to take the "first step" for this potentially symbolic move.



The Long Wait



Former Prisoner of Conscience Ida Nudel was exiled to Moldavia after a four-year banishment in Siberia. She sits and waits for news of yet another application to emigrate to Israel, in a photo obtained by the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. The SSSJ urges letters of support to Nudel at: Ulitsa Sovietskaya 69, Apt. 2, Bender, Moldavian SSR, USSR. Photo by: Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, 210 West 91st Street, New York, N.Y. 10024 (212) 799-8900.

OFFICES THROUGHOUT CLARK COUNTY
NEVADA FIRST

THRIFT FDIC

SIDNEY STERN FOUNDER/PRESIDENT

**WITH OVER 20,000 SQUARE FEET OF SPACE...
WE'RE NEVADA'S LARGEST CARPET WAREHOUSE!**

**THOUSANDS OF
ROLLS ON HAND**

ALSO ARMSTRONG FLOOR DEALER

**CALL FOR
FREE ESTIMATES**

384-8551

OR COME IN

ABSOLUTELY NO OBLIGATION

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK



**105 WEST CHARLESTON BOULEVARD
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA**