

Special Report on World Congress of Families IV May 11-13, 2007. Warsaw, Poland

By Robert Armstrong, Legislative Director, Religious Freedom Coalition

The 2007 World Congress of Families began on the evening before the official meetings, with a private reception where I was able to spend a few minutes one-on-one with Dr. Allan Carlson. He is the head of the whole assembly, which is held every four years. Previous Congresses have been held in Prague (1997), Geneva (1999) and Mexico City (2004).

The next morning, the Congress, which is dedicated to valuing and preserving traditional families, began somewhat ironically at the Palace of Culture and Arts. This building, the tallest in all of Warsaw, was a “gift” to the Polish people from Russia in memory of a dictator, Joseph Stalin. There were over 3,300 delegates present from numerous nations, some as far away as South America. I met with numerous other representatives of pro-family groups from around the world during the Congress.

I was interviewed for 20 minutes by Dan Wooding, ASSIST News, which feeds the BBC Radio Network. Dr. Ted Baehr, publisher of the MOVIEGUIDE, also interviewed me for his worldwide television report.

I met several Polish “survivors” of several European wars. There was a sense of sadness, but also a feeling of hope amongst these people. Hundreds of thousands of Poles, mostly Jews, were killed by the Nazis in World War II. This legacy is hard for the Polish people to forget.

In spite of its conflicted history of serving as a battleground for other European powers, Poland is the only real pro-family major country remaining in Europe. Virtually all other major European Union countries have passed legislation that is destructive to the nuclear family. Many representatives from those other European Union nations saw this Congress as a “last stand” for the family in Europe!

Muslims see the self destructive attitudes of European nations as a blessing for them. Less than two months ago a Muslim in the Sudan told me, “The birth rate in Europe is very low. The 4.5 babies per each of the four Muslim wives, means that the Muslims will be in control within years, without firing a shot or exploding a bomb! With a democracy in England and France, we will be in control of those countries in less than a decade.”

Roman Giertych, Minister of Education and Vice Prime Minister of Poland, greeted the Congress, commenting, “The World Congress of Families is a great honor for Poland. Poland is seen as the hope for Europe and the world. The family is life. Without the family, there is no life. There is no government. There is nothing.” Ambassador Ellen Sauerby, Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, brought greetings from the U.S. government to the World Congress of Families IV, in Poland. She stated, “The state did not create the family; rather, the families created the state...the family has a vital role in society!”

In addition to scholarly speeches and passionate pleas, there was a great deal of discussion among the delegates as to how to bring about genuine changes in attitude towards the family, especially in Europe. The overall theme of the Congress was: “The Natural Family – Springtime

for Europe and the World”. Some of the topics of daily discussions and work groups included: “The Natural Family is the Future of Nations,” “Beyond the Demographic Winter,” and “The Sanctity of the Family.” Pro-life issues were at center stage since the World Congress was dominated by Polish Catholics because of its location this year in Warsaw.

Dr. Patrick Fagan, Senior Fellow at the Heritage Foundation, Washington, D.C., and I spent much time discussing family values on a global scale. Fagan warned, “Feminists of Europe take note, the safest place for children is the natural family. The most dangerous is cohabiting couples.” He gave statistics, research, and graphs to prove his points (www.familyfacts.com)

Dr. Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and I renewed an old friendship during the World Congress of Families IV. He stated that, “The family is the transforming element of society.”

Tom Minnery, Senior Vice President for Government and Public Policy at Focus on the Family discussed global family issues. He thanked the people of Poland for their bravery in combating the secularist agenda of the European Union.

The focus of the Congress was on Europe and how to stop the anti-family legislation from spreading further. I met with many passionate, extremely dedicated leaders who are making a difference in the world. I discussed ways that the Religious Freedom Coalition could help them to have a voice in our own nation’s capitol. Among those were:

Konrad Szymanski (Poland), Member of European Parliament; Ewa Kowalewska (Poland), Director of Human Life International – Europe; Catherine Vierling (France), family physician and General Secretary of European Mothers Association and European Parliament officer; Christine de Vollmer (Venezuela), President of the Latin American Alliance for the Family and Urszula Dudziak, psychologist at the Catholic University of Lublin, Poland.

“The Warsaw Declaration of the World Congress of Families” was released in the final minutes of the Congress (www.worldcongress.org) by Dr. Allan Carlson who concluded, “We are delighted that we were able to come to Poland to show solidarity with the people of Europe who are defending the natural family. We look to future Congresses where we can build on the success of Warsaw.”

Friends of the Religious Freedom Coalition, thank you for your support and prayers.

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