

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME IN POLAND

At the beginning of the pontificate, John Paul II in his letter directed to the beloved Countrymen of October 23, 1978 wrote:

‘And here is remarkable thing, hard to explain in human ways. It is just during the last decades that the Church in Poland has acquired a special significance in the dimensions of the Universal Church and Christianity. It has also become the center of great interest in view of specific situation which has a weighty importance for the search undertaken by contemporary humanity, different nations and states in social and economic domains in the sphere of civilization as a whole’¹.

In these words the Pope points out that the experiences acquired by the Church in Poland in recent decades are of universal consequences. The source of these experiences, generally called ‘a specific situation’ by the Pope, is the confrontation of the Church with the Communist regime which occurs for the first time in history on such a wide scale. It is obvious that current disintegration of the Communist regime in all states of Eastern Europe demonstrated a proper meaning of these experiences.

The present paper is intended to consider the basic elements of that specific situation. These are the following:

- a general characteristic of the Communist regime with special regard to its relation to the Church;
- the attitudes of the Catholic Church towards the policy of the Communist party in Poland.

1 Cf. ‘Messaggio di Giovanni Paolo ai Polacchi’, *Un Papa dalla Polonia*, ed. P. Scandaletti, B. Lewandowski, B. Kruszyłowicz, Padova 1979, p. 159.