

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.

THE COMMUNIST REGIME AND ITS APPLICATION IN POLAND

The name 'communist regime' is used to denote a number of fundamental assumptions on which the Communist party bases its program of directing the state and the whole society, as well as the methods by means of which it accomplishes its goals. The model of this regime is meant here which was created in the Soviet Union after the October 1917 Revolution and after World War II it was followed by all the states in Central-eastern Europe which were included to the bloc of the socialist states. This application in particular countries underwent certain modification which was caused by different cultural tradition of each them and by degree of resistance on the majority of society².

The principal assumption of this regime is ideological and political monism. The substance of the ideology it is formed by the marxist-leninist materialism whose binding interpretation was established by Stalin and his successors holding the office of the Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. According to these ideological assumption the Communist party can be the only power directing the state and the society which should accept its ideology. The mechanism of directing the society is specific for this regime. It consists in transmitting the will of the communist party, or strictly speaking the decisions of central committee, onto the whole society. The practical application of this mechanism gives rise to passivity of the society. It is, therefore, a totalitarian and despotic system which could be established on a breeding ground that is the Russian society used to submission towards the tsarist despotism.

A characteristic feature for this regime are the directing methods, violence and terror including. The method of violence used by Lenin in order to carry out the revolution, was kept by Stalin who even perfected it to build up the most perfect socioeconomic system, the Communist one. Such methods, used with persistence and consistency, created a specific social climate where pathological attitudes grew both on the sides of the ruling and ruled. Fear which took hold of everybody became the binding agent.

Law in this system is viewed as a dictate of the will of the working class while in fact it serves the interests of the group holding the power

2 J. Krukowski, 'Relations between Church and States in Central-Eastern Europe after World War II', *Studia Canonica*, 16 (1982) nr 2, pp. 331-343.

(‘nomenclatura’). This system is completely strange to the concept of natural law.

Another characteristic feature of this system is specific ‘dissociation’ between political declaration, the law and practice. Such dissociation makes manipulation of the society possible. For example, the stalinist constitution of 1936 guaranteed a wide range of fundamental rights and liberties to the citizens and these rights included political rights to vote for representative organs. In fact, the elections in that system mean accepting the candidates previously appointed by the Communist party.

This kind of regime is characterized by a specific policy in relation to religion. It is based on a negative estimation of the role of religion in social life as man’s alienation. Religion and in consequence the Church too is transitional phenomenon; it is supposed to die out in the course of the building of the communist society. The place of religion in man’s life is to be taken by an atheistic outlook on life. Although Lenin declared the ‘freedom of conscience’ and ‘separation between State and Church’, in practice he applied caesaropapism which had ruled in Russia before the October revolution. The believers were treated as citizens of lower category who could not hold any posts of authority in social life. The Orthodox Church was submitted to far-reaching control of the state apparatus. Different methods were applied in relation to the Orthodox Church and other churches in the Soviet Union: from complete destruction to relative tolerance which were used respectively to the degree of their submission to the state power.

One can observe two lines in the application of the stalinist regime in Poland. Although the communist authorities declared the creation of democratic system, in practice a totalitarian system was built. At the beginning, the Communist party admitted the opposition to take part in the ruling coalition. This was so for instance with the Labor Party which based its program on the social teaching of the Catholic Church. Within a relatively short period, however, between 1948 and 1950 the dictatorship of the Communist party was introduced in relation to the alien parties: Democratic Party and United Peasants Party. Other parties were declared illegal and their leaders were arrested. All associations which could play role of political opposition were abolished in order to guarantee the possibility of transmitting the will of the Communist party on the whole society.

Attempts were made to use the Russian patterns of the political system in the policy in relation to religion, that is to the Church. A serious obstacle in the application of that system appeared on the part of

the Catholic Church which is independent of the state and has its own sovereign authority (the Holy See) in international relations. The first sign of the application of the Russian model in denominational policy was the resolution of the Provisional Government of September 12, 1945, on the abrogation of the Concordat with the Holy See³. The pretext for this political motivated act were accusations that the Holy See violated some provisions of the Concordat during World War II. Although point 1 of this resolution stated that the Government 'still leaves complete freedom of activity to the Catholic Church within the framework of the binding laws', in the following years the state gradually limited the freedom of the Church.

To fill the vacuum appeared in the system of the Polish law after the Concordat had been broken, the state power showed a fargoining flexibility. Certain spheres of the activity of the Church were determinad in the form of laws, whereas —in the form of administrative acts or sentences of the Court which had non fondation in laws. It was a process of 'directed secularisation' which was different from the spontaneous secularisation occuring in the democratic countries in the West. This is secularisation controlled by the Communist party using the State apparatus and the State finances to attain its aime, it is to impose one materialistic outlook on the society and to eliminate the influence of the Church on the social life by restricting its activity. This policy was manifested in normative acts which concerned the following.

- secularisation of the marital law; abolishing the religious form of an oath in the court; removing religious symbols from public places;
- secularisation of education through a gradual limitation of religious instruction in public schools; abolishing of private schools run by ecclesiastical institutions;
- nationalization of hospitals and welfare institutions which were owned by ecclesiastical institutions; nationalization of the ecclesiastical charitable organization 'Caritas'; abolition of ecclesiastical associations;
- interference into the matters of filling posts within the Church;
- gradual abolishment of the Catholic press and ecclesiastical publishing houses;
- an attempt at establishing control over the formation of clerics;
- limitation of the property rights of the Church and imposing high income taxes on ecclesiastical institutions.

3 This Resolution was published only in the newspapers. Cf. *Głos Ludu*, September 14, 1945.

Although the Constitution of Polish Peoples' Republic from 1952 proclaimed 'separation between Church and State'⁴, still the State did not give up the efforts to interfere into the internal matters of the Church. Against the constitutional guarantee of the freedom of conscience and confession and equality of citizens regardless of their religion, in practice citizens who openly confess and practice religion were treated as untrustworthy citizens and they had a closed access to the leading offices in social and political life.

The realization of such ideological and political regime by the Communist government in Poland gave rise to an inevitable conflicts both between the State vs. a majority of the society, and the State vs. the Catholic Church.

THE ATTITUDE OF THE CHURCH TOWARD THE COMMUNIST REGIME

After a general view of the Communist regime, let us direct our attention to the attitude assumed by the Church in relation to this regime and to the threats which resulted for the Church and society from the application of this regime in Poland. The answer to this question is not easy one because of great complexity of these problems. It should be stated that the Primate and the Episcopacy of Poland led a key role in determining the attitude of the Church towards the State. The main creator of this attitude was Primate Stefan Wyszyński (1948-1981)⁵. This attitude includes the tasks which the Church has to fulfill in Poland and the methods of activity by means of which it strove to realize its tasks.

First of all, it should be stated that in determining its tasks, the Church took two factors into consideration and these were a religious-moral mission of the Church and its historical bond with the Polish nation. It is characteristic of Cardinal Wyszyński (1948-1981)⁵. This attitude includes the tasks which the Church has to fulfill in Poland and the methods of activity by means of which it strove to realize its tasks.

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4 *Dziennik Ustaw* (Journal of Laws), 1976, nr 7, pos. 36.

5 Cf. A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński-Prymas i Małż Stanu* (Paris 1982); P. Raina, *Kardynał Wyszyński* 1 (London 1979), 2 (London 1986) 3 (London 1988).

nation. It is characteristic of Cardinal Wyszyński that he distinguished double tasks which the Church has to fulfill in Poland and these were:

- the Church own tasks which are of universal character and which follow from the religious-moral mission to each man and each people and nation;
- substitutive tasks of the Church which have also a religious-moral character, but they are adapted to the needs of each people and nation. They follow from fact of inculturation of the Church in the history of a particular nation.

The substitutive tasks of the Church in relation to the Polish nation find their reasons in the thousand years 'bond between Church and nation. They consisted in mutual aid provided in the tragic periods of partition of Poland (1795-1918) and its nazi-occupation (1939-1945) when the nation was deprived of its own political sovereignty. The necessity to undertake the substitutive tasks by the Church also arose after World War II in the situation of menace from the Communist regime which undertook actions meant to change the cultural identity of the Polish nation through the enforcement of materialistic ideology. When the nation was deprived of its own political sovereignty or when such sovereignty was considerably limited, the Church set to represent the nation in the spiritual sphere⁶.

While performing its own tasks, the Church respects a separate character of the tasks of the state which should be a sovereign structure of the nation. Mutual relations between the Church and the state should be settled on the basis of moral and legal norms in view of the aim which is the common good of human person. The components of such common good are the good of the man, of the family and the nation. Cardinal Wyszyński maintained that the Church and the state should act jointly and cooperate in their tasks⁷. Such cooperation is treated as a moral necessity. In practice the cooperation of the Church with the Communist state encounters serious problems.

Under the leadership of Cardinal Wyszyński the Church in Poland worked out different methods which it used in relation to the state. They

6 G. Barberini, *Stato socialista e Chiesa Cattolica in Polonia* (Bologna 1983); W. Chrypiński, *Kościół a rząd i społeczeństwo w powojennej Polsce* (London 1989).

7 J. Krukowski, 'Bases of Church-State cooperation according to the teaching of Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński', *The Review of Comparative Law*, 1 (Lublin 1988) 25-43.

8 Cf. *Listy pasterskie Prymasa Polski 1946-1974* (Paris 1975); *Listy pasterskie Episkopatu Polski 1945-1974 1* (Paris 1975); *Listy pasterskie Prymasa oraz Episkopatu Polski 1975-1981 2* (Paris 1988). Pismo Okólne biura Prasowego Sekretariatu Episkopatu Polski (Warszawa 1968).

can be reduced to two: the defending the rights of the Church, rights of the man, the family and the nation in the situations of menace or violation of these rights by the state; the dialog meant to solve the conflicts and establish cooperation. Both these methods were sometimes applied paralelly, more often, however, a need arose to use the method of defence. Let us consider the ways in which the Church applied these methodes, using the memorials forwarded to the State authorities and pastoral letters to the faithful⁸.

DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH TO CARRY OUT FREELY ITS OWN MISSION

After the Communist party assumed power in Poland, it set about applying the Russian pattern of policy. Such policy met a strong opposition from the Catholic Church⁹.

1) *Defending the Church's unity and independence from the state*

One of the early and very dangerous threats for the Church were those actions of the Communist state which were meant to break its inner unity and to weaken the bond between the Polish society and the Holy See. The Communist government, which assumed power in Poland in July 1945, did not turn to the Holy See for recognition and dit non express any will to establish diplomatic relations. Moreover, on September 12, 1945 it made the resolution on the abrogation the Concordat established with the Holy See by Poland in 1925. With this resolution the Communist government manifested its rejection of the principle of bilateralness in mutual relations between State and Church and the adoption of the principle of unilateralness, i. e. practically the policy of Russian caesaropapism.

A serious threat for the unity between the Church in Poland and Holy See were the obstacles created in the contacts in the relations between Polish bishops and the Bishop of Rome. The strongest tendencies were seen in the period of the greatest stalinist terror, that is till 1956. A hotbed of the attacks the communist propaganda made against the Holy See was the provisional status of the Polish ecclesiastical organization on the Regained Territories, that is those which had

9 Cz. Bartnik, *Chrześcijańska nauka o narodzie według prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego* (Lublin 1982).

been joined to Poland after World War II as compensation for the lands joined to the Soviet Union in the East. Such provisional status was kept until 1974. The Polish bishops made endeavours in this matter in Rome and they explained to the faithful that the cause of such situation was the lack of Peace treaty concerning the borders in Europe.

A serious danger for the internal unity of the Church in Poland, especially in the sphere of relations between the bishops and priests, as well between clergymen and lay Catholics, was the activity a group of priests called 'patriots', organized by the State apparatus using black-mails. The Bishops tried to neutralize this action pointing at the harmfulness of the situation in which priests were dependent on secular power.

A typical manifestation of the methods of caesaropapism used toward the Catholic Church in Poland were the attempts of state apparatus to interfere in the appointing of Church officials. The first sign of this was the Government's decision from January 7, 1951 about the removal of Apostolic administrators on the Regained Territories who had been appointed by Primate of Poland by virtue of 'facultates speciales' granted by the Holy See. Those posts were illegally filled by Capitular vicars. Primate Wyszyński warded off the danger of schism which could arise and gave those Vicars the power of his General vicars by virtue of 'facultates specialissimae'. Another act of interference in the internal matters of the Church was a decree of State Council from February 9, 1953 treating about the filling of Church offices. This decree put a demand that the state should give a prior consent to any personal change in Church offices and to any change in the organizational structure of the Church, e. g. erection of parish. The decree gave rise to a strong protest of the Polish bishops known as 'Non possumus' which was directed to the Government on May 8, 1953. This protest became one of the reasons why Primate Wyszyński was arrested in September 1953 and interned until October 28, 1956. This decree was replaced with a new one from December 3, 1956. This decree was replaced with a new one from December 31, 1956 which was in force until 1989. On its basis, state apparatus lay claim to right to raise objections to candidates for the vacant offices of Residential bishops and Pastors.

Another form of interference in the internal affairs of the Church were attempts to establish control over Seminaries. Those attempts were undertaken by state apparatus in 1950 and were continued in the 1960s. They proved ineffective because of decisive opposition of Church authorities.

However, an attack on ecclesiastical associations made by state apparatus turned out to be successful. Those associations —according to new normative acts issued between 1947 and 1949— should be registered and controlled by state. The Bishops decided that the associations should be replaced by informal groups within the pastoral care. Those associations were than almost entirely liquidated.

2) *Defending the rights to religious education of children and youth*

The majority of conflicts in the relations between Church and Communist state arose in reference to right of the Church to religious education among the school children because the program of ‘directed secularization’ was meant to impose the atheistic outlook on the young generation.

Although in the first years after World War II the Government tolerated religious teaching in public schools, in the following years they began to do away with it. Despite the warranties included in the acts an ‘agreements’ concluded between representatives of the Episcopacy of Poland and the Government in 1950 and 1956, religious teaching was finally removed from schools in virtue of law from July 15, 1961 about the secularisation on the system of education¹⁰. The school curriculum was based on the assumptions of materialistic ideology. The protests expressed by the Episcopacy of Poland undertaken in defence of right of the Church and the rights of catholic parents to bring up their children in the religious spirit were not respected at all. After religious teaching has been removed from schools, the Church organized its own system of teaching religion outside schools in so-called ‘catechetical points’. The state apparatus made attempts to interfere in this system of religious instruction till 1980.

The secularization action also included the children and the youth staying at summer camps organized by state institutions. The Bishops frequently protested against this action but it was not earlier than 1981 that state apparatus ceased it.

3) *Defending the Church's right to run own schools*

Ecclesiastical institutions in Poland had run schools different levels for a long time, especially secondary schools enjoyed the rights of state

10 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 1961, nr 32, pos. 160.

ones. In the 1950's State apparatus began to do away with those schools and they were finally liquidated on the basis of the above mentioned law from 1961. Only few of those schools remained.

The Catholic University of Lublin (the only Catholic University in Communist states) also encountered serious difficulties in its activity, e. g. suspension of the Faculty of Law and Socio-economic Sciences in 1949, income taxes. Those restrictions were lessened not earlier than in 1980 and 1981.

4) *Defending the right to render religious assistance
in the closed institutions*

The Communist state hindered the Church in giving religious assistance to the believers in closed institutions, i. e. prisons, barracks, hospitals, sanatoriums. Despite the warranties included in the 'agreements' from 1950 and 1956, these assistances were forbidden. It was only in 1981 that Government issued regulations which allowed for the performance of religious assistances in closed institutions,, excluding barracks.

5) *Defending the right of the Church its own mass media*

The Communist state created far-reaching obstacles in making use of the mass media by the Church such as the censorship, closing out ecclesiastical publishers, limits of the editions and allotments of paper. It was only in the 1980s that a certain improvement was noticed in this sphere.

6) *Defending the right pursue charitable activity*

In the first years after World War II intense activity was undertaken by an ecclesiastical organization 'Caritas' which was nationalized in 1950. The Bishops' protest had no effect. The revival of this organization was the object of the postulates pronounced by the Polish bishops many times. In that situation, the Church persuaded its charitable activity in the framework of its own pastoral structures, which were especially effective after the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 13, 1981.

7) *Defending the property rights of the Church*

In the first years after World War II the Communist state nationalized the foundations and a considerable part of Church property in Poland. In that difficult situation the Polish bishops undertook endeavours to get warranties for keeping at least a minimum of estates necessary for the performance of religious-moral tasks. The most difficult situation developed on the Regained Territories where until 1974 all the ecclesiastical estates were treated as State property. The general recognition of the legal personality of ecclesiastical units was granted in 1989.

DEFENDING THE RIGHTS OF THE MAN
AND THE NATION

It is a truism that Communist regime is a peculiar system of discriminations used against the rights of individuals and whole social groups. The application of this regime in Poland, however, met an inner resistance from the part of the majority of society. The source of this resistance was the fact that the Polish nation has close bonds with the Western culture and with the Catholic Church.

Although the Church in Poland after World War II had limited possibilities of activity, it not only continued to have a bond with the society, but it even strengthened this bond. It is not difficult to notice that especially in the moments of dramatic conflicts between the Communist government and society which had a cyclic occurrence in the past (1956, 1970, 1976, 1980-81, 1988), the Church stood up for the defence of the rights of the man and the nations. In this process, a leading role was performed by the Church hierarchy: the Primate of Poland [A. Hlond (1945-1948), S. Wyszyński (1948-1981), J. Glemp (1981-) and since 1978 —Pope John Paul II. In these situations, words directed by the Church hierarchy to society and State authorities have an educative and a critical functions. Their influence on the Communist regime is clearly seen and the cause its gradual evolution.

1) *Defending the human rights*

A saying is known that a man in the Communist system is treated as a screw in the machin. Such a passive role of human being in this system

is intended by socialist concept of civil rights as rights assigned to an individual by state which can limit these rights or even suspend them according to the public interest which means, according to the interest of the Communist party.

The Catholic Church in Poland understood to perform the function of defender of human rights through its evangelical activity. The Church teaching about the dignity of man as a human person and about the rights due to him regardless of whether they have been recognized by the state or not. It was already in 1946 —before the passing of a Universal Declaration of Human Rights of UN (1948) and before the publishing of encyclical ‘*Pacem in terris*’ by pope John XXIII (1963) —when Stefan Wyszyński as the Bishop of Lublin stated: ‘The states must recognize human rights to preservation and development of phisical, mental and moral life’.

In the 1950s and 1960s when any publications treating about human rights in Poland, and in other communist states, were forbidden, Primate Wyszyński was the only authority who openly spoke for the protection of human rights in social life. He awoke in society the consciousness of all human rights, i. e. both personal and political, economic and cultural ones. An original feature of his teaching was the proclamation of human right to social love.

In the 1970s there appeared in Poland laic groups which stood for human rights (KOT, ROPCIO, KPN). The Catholic Church gave a moral support for these groups calling for the respect of those cathegories of human rights which were defended by those laic groups. It was in that time when one observed a repprochment between the Laic left and the Church. Then, and especially in 1968, in times of students’ protests, the Church hierarchy directed a special attention to the defence of liberty rights, i. e. the right to the freedom of religion, speech and association. This is a cathegory of human rights which are infringed by totalitarian regime.

Between 1980s and 1981 and following years the Church in Poland gave an authoritative support for the Independent Trade Union ‘Solidarity’. Pope John Paul II also expressed a strong support for the defence of working people’s right to form independent trade union.

The Church hierarchy also directed the adresses to the State authorities in order to quarantee the proper protection of human rights in positive law. This was testified by critical remarks and postulate addressed to Seym (polish parliament) in the discussions concerning the

projects of the Constitution in 1952 and later to the amendments to it in 1976.

In post-war Poland the Polish bishops often stood up for the defence of religious freedom as one of the fundamental rights of the man. In view of the specific restrictions of this freedom by the Communist state, they more specified it than it was in the teaching of Universal Church and International conventions. For example, the Polish Bishops distinguished the following cases of religious freedom:

- the right of the parents to bring up their children in schools according to their religious convictions. The cause of this was imposing one atheistic program of education on public schools;
- the right of the believers to participate in religious meetings and to have a proper number of places of worship (churches, chapels). The cause of this was the restriction to organize pilgrimages and processions, to build churches in new cities;
- the right to have a rest on Sundays and Church holidays. The cause were the facts of organizing 'social mass actions' and 'party mass actions' which means physical work on Sundays;
- the right of believing citizens to active participation in social and political life in equality with non-believers. The cause of this was the discrimination of believing citizens in sociopolitical life.

2) *Defending the right of the nation*

In the Communist regime in Poland there appeared a tendency to identify the good of the nation with interests of one ruling party. It was expressed in a widely advertised slogan: 'the party program is a program of a nation'. The Catholic Church stood against that policy in a two-fold way: 1) proclaiming the rights of the nation, 2) criticizing those undertakings of the state apparatus which menaced the good of the nation, and pointing at the directions of proper solutions of social conflicts.

Primate Wyszyński was a well-known author of the teaching about the rights of the nations. Pope John Paul II has continued it in the international sphere. The marxist concept of subduing the nation to the interest of one party was counteracted by Cardinal Wyszyński in the idea of the superiority of the nation over the state and the idea of an auxiliary role political structures in relation to the nation. According to this

teaching, the nation is being analogical to human person. The former is the subject of inalienable rights like the latter. The political authorities draw their rights from the will of the nation. The state out of its very should serve the protection of a nation's sovereignty.

The Polish nation is a Christian one which follows from two factors. Firstly, a majority of the nation is composed of christened people.

Secondly, the nation has been historically connected with the Church. The Church is to render help to the nation in the spiritual order. This includes the right to defend the nation's rights in cause they are violated by Communist state. During the millenium celebrations of Polish Christianity (1956-1966) the Church undertook the defence of the nation's right to preserve and develop its cultural identity. This defending was caused by a threat coming from Communist regime which aimed at changing the Polish nation's identity through the directed secularization. Interventions of the Church in defence of the nations' rights corresponded to the aspirations of Polish society for its own cultural and political sovereignty.

A great mobilizing effect on the Polish nation's consciousness and the feeling of its own dignity stemmed from the appointment of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła as St. Peter's Successor. Great hopes were raised then. The activity of John Paul II has corresponded to those expectations from the beginning which is especially well seen in his addresses during his first Pilgrimage to Homeland in June 1979 which were understood as a call to the nation for undertaking activities in order to win its own subjectivity¹¹. Of special significance was the stress put on the Gospel of human labour and a working man's dignity, and the protest against treating a working poeple exclusively as an instrument in the production process. The response of the Polish society as peaceful mass protest in Summer 1980, especially the formation of Independent Trade union 'Solidarity', a new subject in Poland's sociopolitical life. This protest aimed at transforming the totalitarian regime into a democratic one.

The process of social changes initiated by 'Solidarity' was stopped by the martial law in December 13, 1981. The Communist apparatus applied an old mechanism of repressive mesasures towards all society. The society was overwhelmed with apathy, lack of perspectives for better future, internal and external emigration. In this situation the Catholic Church undertook an activity aiming at lessening repressions used by

11 'Iter Apostolicum Joannis Pauli II in Poloniam', AAS 71 (1979) 723-888.

State undertook an activity aiming at lessening repressions used by State apparatus, and at restoring the subjectivity due to the nation. Two successive pilgrimages of John Paul II to Homeland (1983 and 1987) had this aim in view¹². The Pope pointed at the Christian meaning of the nation's history, the meanings of the Cross and the Resurrection. Of special significance was the call for courage in overcoming obstacles and the support expressed for delegalized 'Solidarity'.

In 1988 the growing social dissatisfaction with deeper and deeper economic and political crisis effected new waves of strikes. In that situation, the Communist government first threatened with violence, but next gave it up. The central authorities of Communist party expressed their hope that Catholic Church would give help in relieving the social tensions.

What was the attitude assumed by the Church hierarchy in this new situation? On August 26, 1988 John Paul II pointed to the ethical reasons of social protest. He told: '(...) state is truly sovereign only when it is based on the sovereignty of society and nation; when it creates proper conditions on the basis of such sovereignty. It is impossible that only one group or party is sovereign in the state at the cost of the whole nation's rights'. The Episcopacy of Poland indicated that:

- 1) the cause of the present situation is the violations of the rights of man and the whole nation;
- 2) the dialogue between the Government and the representatives of the society is the only way to dissolve all the social conflicts.

When the Communist authorities expressed readiness to talk with the 'Solidarity' leaders at 'the round table', the representatives of the Polish Episcopacy (as mediators) helped in the preparations to these talks and in their difficult continuations. In the effect, on April 5, 1989 'an Agreement of the Round Table' was signed as the basis for the peaceful changing of the Communist regime, that has been in Poland since 1945. It is the beginning of the transition from the dictatorship to the democratic pluralism.

12 'Itinera Apostolica Joannis Pauli II in Polonia', AAS 75 (1983) 889-1000; 80 (1980) 384-496.

13 *Porozumienia okraglego stolu* (Olsztyn 1989)

DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE

The defensive activity of the Church in Poland is not only current of its influence on the Communist regime. Another is the one which is developed parallelly with the former and this is the dialogue¹⁴. The main creator of this dialogue was Primate Wyszyński realized that the tensions between the Church and the Communist state resulted from two totally different concepts of human life. He believed that in practice one should strive to ease them by way of dialogue. The dialogue between the Church and State should be based on partnership, it should be conducted by representatives of both sides in order to solve the conflicts in a peaceful way and agree upon the cooperation in the form of bilateral agreement. The object of this dialogue should comprise a wide range of matters: beginning with the Church's freedom and ending with the living conditions of the nations in relation to which the Church performs its mission. Realisation of such a concept of a dialogue, however, encountered serious difficulties and obstacles both of objective and subjective nature. Let us pay our attention to the course of this realisation. Considering the moment when the Holy See joined the dialogue one can distinguish two stages of its development.

1) *The local stage of the dialogue*

In the early years after World War II there were no conditions for a dialogue between the Holy See and the Communist state in Poland. Responsibility for the Church in Poland was taken on by the Primate and the Episcopacy of Poland.

The initiative to enter into a dialogue between the Church and the Government came from the Polish bishops in August 1948. However, at the beginning the State authorities ignored it. It was only on March 20, 1949 when W. Wolski, minister of public administration, informed Bishop Choromanski, secretary of the Episcopacy of Poland, that Government was ready to begin commission talks. In July 1949 a 'Mixed Commission' began its activity. It was composed of the representatives of the Episcopacy and the Government. The talks, though conducted in an unfavourable atmosphere of growing confrontation on the national and international scales ('cold war'), led to 'an Agreement between the Government and the Polish Episcopacy' signed on April 14, 1950.

14 Cf. J. Krukowski, L'attitude du Card. Stefan Wyszyński face aux rapports entre l'Église et l'état en Pologne, *Raccolta di scritti in onore di Pio Fedele* (Perugia 1984) 913-930.

This agreement resulted from a compromise between both sides and was to serve to 'preservation of internal peace' which was the best preparation to the work on keeping the world peace. It became a precedent in the history of relations between the Catholic Church and the Communist regime. The Polish bishops took up the neutral political position according to which the Church can perform its mission in any kind of state regardless of the political system. This agreement was to secure for the Church the conditions to perform the mission, and for the state authorities support from the Church. Unfortunately, the chances for the cooperation to be realised turned out to be slight. Soon after the agreement had been concluded, the state power began to break its decisions.

The dialogue between the Church and the government was broken by arresting Primate Wyszyński on September 25, 1953. The line of dialogue was renewed in 1956 and it was initiated by a new Communist party leader W. Gomulka. Primate Wyszyński was then released and he undertook a dialogue with the Government again. The 'Mixed Commission' resumed its activity under a new name the 'Joined Commission' representatives of the Government and the Episcopacy of Poland. The main result of its work was a 'communiqué' signed on December 8, 1956 called a 'little agreement'. The Episcopacy then gave a support for the policy of de-stalinization. The State authorities guaranteed realisation of the obligations included in the agreement from 1950. Unfortunately, a few months later the State authorities returned to the stalinist methods in their policy toward the society and the Church. In 1959 the Joined Commission stopped its activity. Such a situation lasted till 1980.

2) *The dialogue between the Holy See and the Polish government*

In the atmosphere of international detente in the 1960s, the Holy See undertook a direct dialogue with the Governments of the Communist states of Central-eastern Europe (signing a protocol with the Government of Hungary in 1964 and with the Government of Yugoslavia in 1966) in order to achieve the improvement of the existence of Church in these countries. That dialogue was called an 'eastern policy of the Vatican'. In 1966 the Holy See also came into contacts with the Government of Poland which was seen in the visit in Poland of Mons. A. Casaroli, official of the Council for Extraordinary Affairs of the Church, and his talks with the representatives of Polish state and the Polish church.

A new stage of this dialogue began in 1974. In virtue of a protocol signed in July 1974, provisional diplomatic relations were established and groups for the working contact between the Holy See and the Government of Poland were appointed. Their task was to prepare the normative acts concerning the 'normalization' of the relations between the Church and Polish state. At the beginning, the Government aimed at normalization 'behind the back' of Polish bishops. This manouver, however, did not succeed. The representatives of the Holy See undertook the activity in close cooperation with the Primate and the Episcopacy of Poland. The latter pointed out that the object of normalization of the relations between Church and State should include the following

- recognition by the State of juridical personality of the Church,
- renewing regular diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Polish state,
- guaranteeing religious freedom to all the citizens,
- recognition of the Polish nation's right to develop of its Christian culture.

While the representatives of the Government pointed only the normalization as the renewal of regular diplomatic relations. This project, however, was not approved of by the Holy See.

The events in the sociopolitical life of Poland which took place under the banner of 'Solidarity' in the years 1980 and 1981 animated the contacts between the Holy See, the Conference of Polish bishops on the one hand and the State authorities on the other. The tragic events of the martial law did not stop these contacts. However, until 1987 one could hardly see any progress in the dialogue which was meant to normalize the mutual relations in the legal sphere. It was only between 1987 and 1989 that a remarkable progress was made. In 1987, after the third pilgrimage of John Paul II to the Homeland a 'Mixed Commission', which included representatives of the Holy See and the Conference of Polish bishops, was formed. Its aim was to continue a dialog with the representatives of the Polish state. In the course of the work on these issues there occurred a polarisation of the common standpoint of both sides as to range of the matters which should be regulated by means of international convention between the Holy See and the Polish state as well as those matters which were to be granted only by Sejm. These settlements brought about new legal and diplomatic events.

The first of these was the passing of three denominational laws by Sejm on May 17, 1989¹⁵. These were:

- 1) the law on the status of the Catholic Church in Poland,
- 2) the law on the guarantee of the freedom of conscience and confession,
- 3) the law on the insurance of clergy.

These laws repealed the restrictions which the Communist power attempted to enforce on the Church and the whole Polish society in the sphere of religion during the 45 years after World War II. Although these acts still have some traces of stalinist caesaropapism they present a great progress towards respecting the religious freedom both in the aspects of individuals and the community.

Another weighty event on an international scale was John Paul II's decision dated July 17, 1989, which concerned the renewal of regular diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Poland after a 50 years' break. In virtue of this decision an Ambassador of Poland was accredited to the Holy See and Warsaw witnessed the return of the Apostolic Nuncio in Poland. One of his tasks will be to negotiate a convention between the Holy See and Poland.

Summing up above considerations, one should say that in the history of Church-state relations after World War II the Catholic Church in Poland has performed a double task —as defender of justice and peace. The former has been carried out through defence of the rights of the man and the nation. The latter is performed by a dialogue with the State authorities and a call to solving the sociopolitical conflicts between the Communist power and the society by way of a dialogue with the aim of passing from the dictatorship to parliamentary democracy.

It is symptomatic that the Polish experiences find fast application in 1989 in the neighboring countries of Eastern Europe which remained in the same political situation. The peaceful political changes in these countries (Hungary, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Bulgaria, eastern republics of the Soviet Union, exception blood-revolt in Romania) are taking place by way of dialogue between the Communist authorities and Leaders of the political opposition. At the same time, one can notice certain undertakings meant to establish diplomatic relations between those states and the Holy See.

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15 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 1989, nr 29, pos. 154-156.