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FR. FLORIAN STABLEWSKI'S DECLARATION OF LOYALTY
TO THE PRUSSIAN AUTHORITY OF 26 OCTOBER 1891:
BETWEEN AMBITION, NECESSITY AND OBEDIENCE

1. THE FIGURE OF FR. FLORIAN STABLEWSKI
IN THE OPINION OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES AND POSTERITY:
THE STATE OF RESEARCH

Fr. Dr. Florian Stablewski was a well-known person in the society of the Grand Duchy of Poznań long before he was nominated to the post of the Gniezno-Poznań archbishop.¹ From 1876 he was a Deputy of the Polish Circle in Berlin. During the *Kulturkampf* he repeatedly spoke in the forum of the Prussian Parliament in defense of the Catholic Church and the Polish language, winning renown and recognition in Polish society, and aversion and hostility in the Prussian ruling and conservative circles.² Hence the news

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¹ Cf. Witold MATWIEJCZYK, *Niemieccy katolicy w Poznańskim a polityka narodowościowa rządu pruskiego 1871–1914* [German Catholics in the Poznań Region Versus the Prussian Government's Ethnic Policies] (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2009), 241–256; IDEM, “Tragizm ugody czy tragizm samotności? Florian Stablewski na stolicy arcybiskupiej w Gnieźnie i Poznaniu [The Tragedy of Settlement or the Tragedy of Loneliness? Florian Stablewski at the Archbishop's See in Gniezno and Poznań],” in *Scientia et Fidelitate. Księga pamiątkowa Ewy i Czesława Deptułów Profesorów Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego* [Scientia et Fidelitate. A Commemorative Book for Ewa and Czesław Deptuła, Professors of the Catholic University of Lublin], edited by Tomasz Panfil (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2013), 705–713. The present deliberations are an extended version of the theses contained in the abovementioned articles.

² A list of his parliamentary speeches in: Kazimierz ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski. Arcybiskup gnieźnieński i poznański (1841–1906)* [Florian Stablewski: The Gniezno-Poznań Archbishop (1841–1906)] (Gniezno: Gaudentinum, 1993).

that the Prussian government accepted his candidacy caused a sensation and got a lot of publicity in the European press.³ It was universally thought that his election to the Archdiocese See in 1891 was a great Polish success and a symbolic regaining of the capital of Greater Poland from German hands. At the same time in many articles and commentaries the fact was recognized that, after Bismarck's resignation, Stablewski's election was a special expression of the Prussian government's concessions to the Poles.

His rule in the archdiocese had at least three important and distinct stages. In the first, covering the period of 1892–1894, Stablewski tried to maintain not only correct, but also friendly, publicly shown, relations with the Berlin court and the Prussian government. At the same time it was a period when his actions gained fairly strong, albeit not immediate political support from the “court party,” that is the Poznań conservatives and ultramontanists, who took the Prussian promises at face value and supported the government in parliamentary voting. For Stablewski the period was ultimately a personal success when, on his initiative and as a result of his efforts both in Rome and in Berlin, in 1894 lessons on the Polish language were reintroduced in elementary schools as optional.⁴

However, at the same time, the year 1894 witnessed Chancellor Caprivi's resignation and the end of his policy of “reconciliation” (*Versöhnungspolitik*); at nearly the same time nationalist circles established the German Eastern Marches Society, acronymically known as Hakata.

The second stage, that is the years 1895–1901, is a transitional period signifying a gradual and mutual cooling of the relations between Archbishop Stablewski and the Prussian government and court in Berlin. The stage was closed by the Września children's strike concluding with the court's severe sentence and the administrative authorities' drastic repressions, to which Stablewski did not take a stand publicly, being under great pressure from the Prussian authorities and not finding even the least support from the Apostolic See.⁵

The last stage of his life covers the years 1902–1906. Until 1905 the Archbishop, suffering from a serious heart disease, rarely left the bishop's

³ Numerous articles in the German, Austrian, French and Polish press on Stablewski's nomination in: Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes in Berlin, sign. R. 3987, R. 3988.

⁴ MATWIEJCZYK, *Niemiecy katolicy w Poznańskim*, 264.

⁵ Kazimierz ŚMIGIEL, “Działalność arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego na rzecz pacierza szkolnego i nauczania religii w języku polskim w latach 1901–1902 (strajk wrzesiński) [Archbishop Stablewski's Work for the School Prayer and the Teaching of Religion in the Polish Language in the Years 1901–1902 (the Września Strike)],” *Saeculum Christianum* 1 (1994), No. 2: 219–231.

palace and Poznań. In administrating current matters he was replaced by Suffragan Bishop Edward Likowski. It was a period of intensive Germanization effected by the Prussian government and its attempts to limit Bishop Stablewski's authority, e.g. by assigning to the bishopric a coadjutor who was loyal to the authorities. It was also then that Stablewski made most concessions to the government (for example by granting privileges to German Catholics in pastoral work, by agreeing to the participation of students of the Poznań Seminary in lectures of the Royal Academy in Poznań, or staffing high-ranking posts and ranks with German clergymen). The period concluded with a short improvement in the Archbishop's health in 1905 and the dramatic events during the school strike of 1906–1907. Finally, his firm stand and pastoral letter admitting children the right to learn religion in their native language made the government try to dismiss him; however, this action was interrupted by the Archbishop's natural death on 24 November 1906.

After his death, along with obituaries, commentaries and articles were again spread in the European press appraising (usually critically) Stablewski's political activities and attitude. For Polish society his death, however, was inscribed in a martyrological context: he died at the climax of the school strike and of the Prussian authorities' harsh restrictions. In his associates' opinion, with his attitude he took a stand against Germanization and he acted in the defense of the faith and of the Polish nationality; in this way his figure was considered equal to that of Archbishop Ledóchowski and his predecessors, persecuted by the Prussian authorities. This shows that Stablewski's associates and friends belonging to his close circle after his death tried to confer upon him the "due" rank in the pantheon of Polish national heroes.

The first outline of his biography was published in the Krakow *Czas* by his school mate and friend of many years, the ex-Rector of the Jagiellonian University and a Deputy to the Vienna State Council, Fr. Canon Władysław Chotkowski. He pointed to the late Archbishop's oratorical talent that had been revealed in the many funeral speeches Stablewski gave at the funerals of outstanding representatives of aristocracy, as well as of the political and cultural elites of Greater Poland. His suggestion that Stablewski's collected speeches should be soon published was realized as early as 1912 by the late Archbishop's close associate, Fr. Józef Kłos.⁶ The editor knew that Sta-

⁶ *Arcybiskupa Floriana Oksza Stablewskiego Mowy żałobne z dodatkiem kilku innych mów kościelnych i dwóch okólników* [Archbishop Florian Oksza Stablewski's Funeral Speeches Supplemented with Several Other Church Speeches and Two Circular Letters], edited by Józef Kłos (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1912).

blewski's "funeral speeches," inspiring respect, recognition and admiration in his contemporaries, were the best way to the posterity. "In Archbishop Stablewski's speeches you will find a language that is clear, noble, sometimes indeed majestic, as well suiting ecclesiastical shows as de Palestrina's music suits religious rites" Fr. Kłos wrote.⁷ However, what is important is that this source edition of nearly 500 pages, provided with the Archbishop's portrait, was preceded by a fairly extensive biography, in which Fr. Kłos presented Stablewski not only as an outstanding politician who spoke in the Prussian parliament in defense of Poles' national and religious rights (which was generally known), but also as Cardinal Ledóchowski's close associate in the period of the *Kulturkampf*. Stablewski's letters and reports sent to Ledóchowski were to be sent directly to the Pope and influence his policies towards Prussia. To support his theses, Fr. Kłos copiously quoted the Cardinal's letters to the Września parish priest,⁸ however, with the reservation that for the good of the public many problems that are hidden in Church archives may still not be quoted.⁹ "So let his great works ripen, until one day, covered with the venerable patina of age, they will constitute a very serious volume in a work by a serious writer, a volume that will testify loudly that the life and work of Archbishop Stablewski were full of gruelling struggles to save the Catholic soul of the nation and its dearest treasures."¹⁰

Fr. Kłos acted and wrote his texts in this spirit during the whole interwar period. On 8th July 1935 he delivered one of his occasional sermons at the celebration of the unveiling of the Archbishop's monument in the Poznań cathedral. In the presence of the Primate and the Bishops present he quoted the inscription on the commemorative plaque placed on the monument that read:

"Archbishop Florian Oksza Stablewski. That fearless fighter for the rights of the Nation and the Church at the forum of the Sejm. From 1891 to 1906

⁷ Ibid., IV.

⁸ Ibid., XIX: "From the Cardinal's letters it is easy to find out that, as Leon XIII and Windhorst stayed in close contact as far as the matters concerning German Catholics were concerned, so Fr. Stablewski's opinions were listened to and his advice was taken in many questions connected with our archdioceses, and it is also clear that our deputy, making in his speeches just desiderata and demands to the government, acted with the government's approval."

⁹ Ibid., LXVII: "Today it would be too early to try to describe in detail the history of the Church in Greater Poland under Archbishop Stablewski's rule. There is such a variety of sacrifices and efforts, momentary successes and painful illusions, grappling and struggles, that a faithful and detailed picture of his work, without gaps or holes, can be only presented in the light of documents kept in the Archbishop's files. And it is clear that not only prudence, but a thousand other considerations today still do not allow the drawing of details out from official concealment to the light of the day."

¹⁰ Ibid.

the Archbishop of Gniezno and Poznań. An ardent supporter of the people and a defender of the faith. He inspired the Catholic social movement in the spirit of the encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. He lit the fire of religious education in *Przewodnik Katolicki*. He revived religious life in the archdioceses. He deserves the gratitude of the generations to come." At the end Fr. Kłos summed up his disquisition with the words: In how few words this epitaph summarizes the great work, of immense dimensions, of the great man!¹¹

In a similar tone Stablewski's last private secretary (chaplain), and later the Bishop of Łomża, Stanisław Łukomski presented the figure of the Archbishop in his short memoirs of him that were published in 1933.¹² They were also to show Stablewski's relentless struggle with the policy of Germanization carried out by the Prussian government, which was not known to the public. However, the author omitted or belittled the issues and problems that were Stablewski's obvious failures.¹³

The main tone of the narration adopted soon after the Archbishop's death also became established after the war. In Communist times especially, historians of the Church or those connected with Church historiography even more strongly stressed Stablewski's services in the work of defending Polishness against Germanization and his involvement in the social field, especially with workers.¹⁴ However, at the same time studies appeared that

¹¹ *Pamięci Arcybiskupa Stablewskiego* [To the memory of Archbishop Stablewski]. Fr. J. Kłos's sermon delivered in the Poznań cathedral at the celebration of unveiling the Archbishop's monument, 8 July 1935, p. 7.

¹² Stanisław ŁUKOMSKI, *Arcybiskup Stablewski, kartki z jego życia i działania* [Archbishop Stablewski, Cards in His Life and Work] (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, [1933]). "Fr. Florian Stablewski belongs to the greatest Princes of the Polish Church and he deserves a serious work that would preserve his uncommon works and services. [...] Standing by his side in the years 1898–1906 [...] I witnessed many of his struggles with the violence of the Prussian government and with the assaults from people hostile to Catholicism and Polishness." Ibid., "Wstęp [Introduction]," 5–7). At nearly the same time the first academic article in German appeared that systematically analyzed the opinions in the Polish and German press in the first period of Stablewski's work as an archbishop: Leonhard MÜLLER, *Nationalpolnische Presse, Katholizismus und katholischer Klerus. Ein kirchenund zeitungsgeschichtlicher Ausschnitt aus den Tagen des Großkampfes zwischen Deutschland und Polentum in den Jahren 1896–1899* (Breslau: Verlag Müller und Seiffert, 1931). To today Müller's entries in the catalogues in the files of the principal presidium of the province are preserved in the State Archives in Wrocław, which proves that the author conducted a comprehensive survey of the sources for his work.

¹³ For example, the seminary students' compulsory participation in the lectures at the Prussian (Protestant) Academy in Poznań that was mentioned above, cf. ŁUKOMSKI, *Arcybiskup Stablewski*, 80–84.

¹⁴ Jarosław LEŚNOWOLSKI, "O właściwą ocenę patriotyzmu arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego (1841–1906) [For a Proper Appraisal of Archbishop Florian Stablewski's (1841–1906) Patriotism]." *Nasza Przeszłość* 25 (1966): 221–231; Jerzy PIETRZAK, "Floryan Stablewski, 1891–1906

critically appraised his political work, completely leaving aside Stablewski's Church work.¹⁵ Their best expression was the article by Adam Galos saying that Stablewski's policy of coming to a "settlement" with the Prussian government that elevated him to the rank of the archbishop and directed him the whole time of his rule in the dioceses, ultimately led him to personal defeat, as his attitude was rejected both by the Prussian authorities and by Polish society.¹⁶ The arguments used by the author of the article deserve special attention, as they were supported by an analysis of Prussian ministerial files that after the war were kept in the archive in Merseburg (East Germany), to which access was difficult, especially for historians of the Church.

Over the next years both Polish and German historians added to the debate more publications based on source materials. The more detailed the analyses of various aspects of Archbishop Stablewski's work, the more the main motive of the ideological appraisal of his attitude was pushed into the background.¹⁷ Although after Adam Galos nobody expressed such radical

[Florian Stablewski, 1891–1906],” in *Na stolicy prymasowskiej w Gnieźnie i w Poznaniu. Szkice o prymasach Polski w okresie niewoli narodowej i w II Rzeczypospolitej* [At the Gniezno and Poznań Primate's See: Sketches about the Primate's of Poland in the Period of National Captivity and in the II Republic], ed. Feliks Lenort (Poznań: Księgarnia Św. Wojciecha, 1982), 245–250.

¹⁵ Jan CHAMOT, “Rola kleru katolickiego w strajku szkolnym w Wielkopolsce (1906–1907) [The Role of the Clergy in the School Strike in Greater Poland (1906–1907)],” *Studia z Dziejów Kościoła Katolickiego* [Studies from the History of the Catholic Church] 1 (1960), No. 1: 101–113; Michał PIRKO, “Stanowisko arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego na tle polityki rządowej w sprawie wrześnińskiej [Archbishop Florian Stablewski's Stand Against the Background of the Government's Policy on the Września Issue],” *Studia z Dziejów Kościoła Katolickiego* 5 (1967), No. 8: 88–106; IDEM, “Arcybiskup Stablewski a strajk szkolny (1906–1907) [Archbishop Stablewski and the School Strike (1906–1907)],” *Euhemer. Przegląd Religioznawczy* 1968, No. 3–4 (69–70): 59–73.

¹⁶ Adam GALOS, “Tragizm ugody. Władze pruskie a arcybiskup Stablewski [The Tragedy of Settlement: The Prussian Authorities versus Archbishop Stablewski],” *Przegląd Zachodni* 31 (1975), No. 2: 235–256; cf. MATWIEJCZYK, “Tragizm ugody,” 706.

¹⁷ Lech TRZECIAKOWSKI, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających w Wielkopolsce w erze Caprivi (1890–1894)* [The Policies of the Polish Classes of Owners in Greater Poland in the Era of Caprivi (1890–1894)] (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 1960), 97–107; IDEM, “Geneza powołania Floriana Stablewskiego na stolicę arcybiskupią gnieźnieńsko-poznańską [The Genesis of the Appointment of Florian Stablewski as the Gniezno-Poznań Archbishop].” In *Polska Niemcy Europa, Studia z dziejów myśli politycznej i stosunków międzynarodowych* [Poland Germany Europe: Studies in the History of Political Thought and International Relations], edited by Antoni Czubiński (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza), 185–196; Kazimierz KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji kapitulnej arcybiskupów gnieźnieńskich i poznańskich w latach 1821–1925* [From the History of the Capitular Election of Gniezno-Poznań Archbishops in the Years 1821–1925]. *Studia i Materiały*, t. 49 (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza. Wydział Teologiczny, 2002) (the typescript of the work of 1961 was stopped from being printed by Cardinal S. Wyszyński for fear of political repercussions); Rudolf KORTH, *Die preußische Schulpolitik und die polnischen Schulstreiks* (Würzburg: Holzner, 1963), 125–130; Erwin Gatz, “Einführung,”

opinions, an ultimate and univocal answer to the questions and charges made by him more than thirty years ago was not given, even by Stablewski's biography written by Fr. Kazimierz Śmigiel.¹⁸ Hence, it is worth going back to those charges and confront them in a broader perspective based on the most recent state of research.

2. AN ANALYSIS OF FLORIAN STABLEWSKI'S POLITICAL STANCE IN THE FACE OF ASSUMING THE POST OF ARCHBISHOP

2.1. POINT OF DEPARTURE: CHARGES

In the article quoted above Adam Galos states at the very beginning:

in *Akten zur preußischen Kirchenpolitik in den Bistümern Gnesen-Posen, Kulm und Ermland*, ed. Erwin Gatz (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1977; Zygmunt ZIELIŃSKI, "Arcybiskup Florian Oksza-Stablewski. Wokół kryteriów oceny reprezentanta Kościoła i społeczności polskiej w Poznańskim (Archbishop Florian Oksza-Stablewski: On the Criteria of Appraisal of the Representative of the Church and of the Polish Community in the Poznań Region). *Życie i Myśl* 36 (1987), No. 1–2: 133–146; reprint: "Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski jako reprezentant interesów społeczności polskiej. Problem kryteriów oceny," in Zygmunt ZIELIŃSKI, *Kościół i naród w niewoli* [The Church and the Nation in Captivity] (Lublin: Redakcja Wydawnictw KUL, 1995), 258–272 (further quotations from the edition of 1995); Helmut NEUBACH, "Der Gnesen-Posener Erzbischof Florian v. Stablewski und seine Stellung zur polnischen Bewegung in Posen und Oberschlesien (1894)," in *Beiträge zur deutsch-polnischen Nachbarschaft. Festschrift für Richard Breyer zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Csaba János Kenéz, Helmut Neubach, and Joachim Rogall (Berlin, Bonn: Westkreuz Verlag, 1992), 113–123; ŚMIGIEL, *Działalność arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego*, 219–231; IDEM, "Walka duchowieństwa wrzeńskiego z postępującą germanizacją [The Struggle of the Września Clergy Against the Progression of Germanization]," in *Strajk dzieci wrzeńskich z perspektywy wieku* [The Strike of the Września Children from the Perspective of the Time], ed. Stanisław Sierpowski (Poznań, Września: Bogucki Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 2001), 57–72; John J. KULCZYCKI, *Strajki szkolne w zaborze pruskim 1901–1907* [orig. *School strikes in Prussian Poland, 1901–1907*], trans. Danuta Zasada (Poznań: UW WKiS, 1993); Robert Romuald KUFEL, *Działalność pastoralna arcybiskupa Floriana Okszy Stablewskiego 1891–1906* [Archbishop Florian Oksza Stablewski's Pastoral Work 1891–1906] (Zielona Góra: Agencja Wydawnicza PDN, 2013); Andrzej KWILECKI, "Stablewscy herbu Oksza. Między dworem i Kościołem [The Stablewskis of Oksza: Between the Court and the Church]," *Ecclesia. Studia z Dziejów Wielkopolski* 4 (2009): 245–261; Stefan STABLEWSKI, "Snop światła na postać Floriana Stablewskiego, arcybiskupa gnieźnieńskiego i poznańskiego. Z pedagogiki społecznej XIX stulecia [A Shaft of Light on the Figure of Florian Stablewski, the Gniezno-Poznań Archbishop. From the Social Pedagogy of the 19th Century]." *Ecclesia. Studia z Dziejów Wielkopolski* 6 (2011): 176–183.

¹⁸ Kazimierz ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski. Arcybiskup gnieźnieński i poznański (1841–1906)* [Florian Stablewski: The Gniezno-Poznań Archbishop (1841–1906)] (Gniezno: Gaudentinum, 1993); cf. Witold MOLIĆ, "Biografia arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego [Archbishop Florian Stablewski's Biography]," *Kwartalnik Historyczny* 102 (1995), vol. 2: 109–118.

the very definition of the term “settlement” is not simple. Generally all its manifestations were treated in contemporary times and in later historical literature rather one-sidedly. Condemning the tendency to settle relations with the partitioners in the 19th century is actually well-understood in the view of the significance that the struggle for national rights had for the history of Polish identity. However, this position adversely affected the way the settlement was written about. In contemporary polemics in the press, sometimes, especially when the texts were written by people opposing the settlement, its meaning was widely spread to cover many opinions, and in other cases, especially when activists suspected of adhering to the ideals of the settlement took to the floor, they tried to narrow the notion, sometimes in a radical way [...] [However – W.M.] the attitude of Polish public opinion not only considerably limited the number of overt adherents to the settlement, but also caused its program to be rarely formulated. This was mainly the case in the Prussian partition, where on the one hand the chances of realizing such a program were very poor, and on the other it was most difficult to equate those willing to settle things with legalism. [...] Stablewski’s action in the period of serving as archbishop, however, in many cases exceeded the limits of legalism, or even loyalty, to the state and the government. Hence the question of the Prussian authorities’ attitude towards him is even more important.¹⁹

Next, Galos argued that “one of the few policy statements tending towards settlement published outside the range of Polish opinion” was the declaration of loyalty made by Stablewski on 26th October 1891 (so still before he was nominated to the post of archbishop) in Wrocław in the presence of Prince-Bishop Georg von Kopp.²⁰

In later publications several times the charges formulated by Galos against Stablewski were referred to and their authors tried to refute them, showing the Archbishop’s various forms of work and activity in defense of “the faith and the nation.” In those analyses the declaration itself was marginalized or omitted. Only Fr. Zygmunt Zieliński in his twice published article discussing the criteria of the appraisal of Archbishop Stablewski as a representative of the interests of the Polish community²¹ stressed that “the significance of the statement made by Stablewski on 26th October 1891 declaring loyalty was essential for his nomination. [...] The government preferred such a written declaration, since it was a guarantee of harmonious cooperation between the clerical authority and the state in the one area that in this respect was turbulent and explosive.”²² The circumstances of making the declaration and its significance for the characteristics of Stablewski’s political attitude will be the subject of further discussion.

¹⁹ GALOS, “Tragizm ugody,” 235–236.

²⁰ Ibid., 238.

²¹ ZIELIŃSKI, “Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski,” cf. footnote 17.

²² Ibid., 263.

2.2. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE MAKING OF THE DECLARATION

a) Rejection of the candidacy of bishop Likowski

On Sunday 1st November 1891 the Poznań press, repeating the information that had been published by German journalists on the previous day, mentioned for the first time the Września parish priest Fr. Dr Florian Stablewski as a sure candidate for the Archbishopric in Gniezno and Poznań.²³

His nomination was a great surprise for all observers of political and ecclesiastical life in the Poznań region. Fr. Prelate Stablewski was a deputy to the Prussian parliament of many years' standing and in its forum he spoke 80 times in defense of the rights of the Catholic Church and of the Polish language. He indefatigably defended the Polish children's right to learn religion in their native language. For ordinary observers, especially strange was the fact that the candidature of such a significant figure of a distinguished priest-politician who rendered great service for the cause of defending the Polish identity was put forward by the Prussian government for St. Wojciech's archbishopric that was still remembered as the see of the primates of Poland.

Another fact that was a surprise was that although Fr. Deputy Stablewski was well-known and popular in the broad circles of public opinion, from the point of view of the Church hierarchy his position among the clergy of Greater Poland was rather modest. Even though he was the parish priest in Września, a papal house prelate and a protonotary apostolic, these titles and functions did not give him either great influence or significance in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Poznań itself. The most important figure here, one who enjoyed wide recognition, was Auxiliary Bishop Edward Likowski, who, after Dinder's death, was elected chapter vicar and diocese administrator by the Poznań Chapter. In the characterization of the possible candidates for the post of the Gniezno-Poznań archbishop that was prepared in the middle of July 1890 by the president of the Poznań province Count Zedlitz, Bishop Likowski was listed in first place. Zedlitz stressed that Likowski

coming from very modest social circles worked hard and with his tirelessness and diligence he achieved the level of a man with broad general knowledge, who, apart from this, acquired outstanding theological knowledge, and he distinguishes himself with wisdom, is worldly-wise and is a person of considerable refinement [...] Among the Catholic clergy he has broad relations. He is also held in high regard by lay people. As the result of the above merits in the diocese he has so important a rank that none in the clergy can be his equal.²⁴

²³ *Dziennik Poznański*, No. 250, 1st November 1891, 1.

²⁴ Quoted after: KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 154–155.

Likowski's additional advantage, to which Zedlitz also pointed, was the fact that from the time of the First Vatican Council, in which Likowski took part as the confidant of Cardinal Ledóchowski, he was in the Cardinal's good graces, and after Dinder's death his candidature was unambiguously supported by the Cardinal with Pope Leo XIII. Likowski regularly exchanged letters with his protector in Rome and was sure of his support.²⁵

This means that Zedlitz thought that the government should accept Likowski's candidacy, as

for the interest of the state it is more advantageous to promote a person with a clear Polish patriotic nature than one with a weak personality, even if he is of German nationality, provided that in the former case the given person is self-reliant and as well-known as e.g. Bishop Likowski. Among Polish society Likowski is thought to be predestined for the archbishopric and if he is promoted to this post, it would be recognized by this society as a most important concession from the government.²⁶

Moreover, the combined chapters did not have any doubts and in a secret ballot on 2nd July 1890 in the first voting they already indicated Bishop Likowski as the most serious candidate for the post of archbishop. Unfortunately neither he nor the other five candidates from the chapters' list were accepted by the Prussian government.²⁷ Cardinal Ledóchowski's strenuous efforts and even the persistence of Pope himself who supported this candidacy, did not change the Prussian authorities' stand; they only prolonged the vacancy. Hence a very important conclusion followed, which at that time, in the context of the painstaking endeavors to promote a Polish candidate, was missed even by keen observers of political life: the rejection of Likowski's candidacy meant that the government did not want a lasting or true "settlement" with the Polish subjects of the Prussian monarchy, with whose "self-reliant" and generally respected representative they would have to conduct tough negotiations in order to establish common elements of Church and national policies in Greater Poland. Hence the rejection of Likowski's candida-

²⁵ Robert KUFEL, *Edward Likowski (1836–1915). Sufragan poznański, metropolita gnieźnieński i poznański, prymas Polski* [Edward Likowski (1836–1915). The Poznań Bishop Suffragan, Gniezno-Poznań Metropolitan, Primate of Poland], Zielona Góra: Wydawnictwo Diecezji Zielonogórsko-Gorzowskiej, 2010, 173, 176–179.

²⁶ Quoted after: KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 155; TRZECIAKOWSKI, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających w Wielkopolsce*, 99–100: "Likowski was a highly educated man; he was able, and had considerable influence both among the clergy and the Greater Poland notables. He maintained lively relations with the clergy in other countries, among others with Cardinal Ledóchowski. [...] he seriously counted on his election."

²⁷ KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 153–154.

cy should be the first point of reference in analyzing the circumstances of the election of Florian Stablewski. As a politician, Stablewski could easily draw conclusions from Likowski's defeat and find that, without a compromise, no Polish candidate could be nominated.

From the point of view of the Prussian government's policy, the nomination of a Polish candidate was an example of the *divide et impera* rule, and not a result of their sincere will to reach a settlement with Polish society. This aim of this policy was to win favor with Poles and to get their political support (or, more precisely, the support of the circles of Polish deputies) for Caprivi's government at the price of possibly few concessions.²⁸ The approval for electing a Pole for the archbishopric in Poznań was one such minimum concession that was, in any case, partly forced by the earlier course of events and unpleasant experiences with Archbishop Dinder who had just died. Firstly, the Berlin authorities were clearly convinced that the German nationality of the bishop alone did not guarantee the realization of the government's policies towards the Church and in the national arena.²⁹ Secondly, for more than a year after his death, finding a German candidate proved impossible if he were to be accepted by the Pope and by Poles – and the government needed a person who would be credible both for Rome (because of the concessions and gestures of goodwill shown by Leo XIII to Wilhelm II), and for Polish society, whose conservative wing was willing to be reconciled with the government and its policies.³⁰ Only a Pole “to the core” could be such a person. What is more, electing a Pole was an additional asset in foreign policy, because it could act as a threat to the emerging Russian-French rapprochement.³¹ Taking into consideration all these circumstances, one assumption was really important for the government: the new archbishop should be politically so harmless that he would not thwart the benefits won

²⁸ Martin BROSZAT, *Zweihundert Jahre deutsche Polenpolitik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1972), 155: “Nach der Entlassung Bismarcks machte Reichskanzler Caprivi (1890–94) noch einmal den kurzlebigen Versuch, das Polentum durch eine Reihe versöhnlicher Maßnahmen zu gewinnen.”

²⁹ Lech TRZECIAKOWSKI, “Stosunki między państwem a Kościołem katolickim w zaborze pruskim w latach 1871–1914 [The Relations Between the State and the Catholic Church in the Prussian Partition in the years 1871–1914], in IDEM, *W kręgu polityki. Polacy-Niemcy w XIX wieku* [In the Circle of Politics. Poles-Germans in the 19th Century] (Poznań: Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza, 2002), 209

³⁰ Cf. ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 74–87; TRZECIAKOWSKI, *Stosunki między państwem a Kościołem*, 209

³¹ Cf. TRZECIAKOWSKI, “Geneza powołania,” 194; IDEM, *Polityka polskich klas posiadających*, 56–59, 102–103.

by the government in the ecclesiastical-national area from the period of the *Kulturkampf*. This thesis is confirmed by the rejection of the candidacy of Likowski, about whom Zedlitz wrote in the conclusion of his characterization: "With respect to the Church he belongs strictly to the ultramontane trend; politically he is a patriot Pole. Neither to one nor to the other side his convictions will waver [...]." ³² Pertinacious in his attitude and not willing to give in, Likowski was not acceptable for the Prussian authorities.

Once again then we have to return to the question why, in these circumstances, the government put forward an even worse candidate: a "professional" politician who was a member of the Prussian Landtag, known for passionate speeches against the government's policies and in defense of the rights of the Church and the Polish nation? ³³

b) *Modus vivendi* as the first condition of Stablewski's nomination

As has already been mentioned, after the death of Juliusz Dinder on 30th May 1890, for nearly a year the negotiations between Rome and Berlin did not yield any result. Probably it was only then that the Wrocław Bishop Georg Kopp persuaded the new Minister of Religion Count Zedlitz that a Pole might become the Archbishop if he would be properly submissive to the government. This stand was accepted both by the Chancellor and the Emperor. ³⁴ In this first stage, the candidacy of Stablewski was not taken into consideration, and Kopp himself did not know him personally. ³⁵ According to Stablewski's biographer Fr. Kazimierz Śmigiel, the Pope himself, discouraged by the impossibility of forcing Likowski's candidacy, on 12th October 1891 sent a letter to Kopp suggesting Stablewski's candidature. Close relations between the Wrocław Prince Bishop and the Berlin government unambiguously indicated that it was Chancellor Caprivi who was the real addressee of the letter. The new candidature soon gained the acceptance of the Berlin authorities that entrusted Kopp with the special and obviously informal

³² KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 155.

³³ Zygmunt Zielinski ("Arcybiskup Stablewski," 263), citing Lech Trzeciakowski, mentions the three most important factors, in his opinion, that decided about the nomination of Stablewski: "1) a new lineup of political forces in the Reich and in Prussia in the era of Caprivi; 2) the excluding of a German candidate by Rome; 3) the preferences given to a candidate coming from ultraconservative and loyalist circles over an apolitical one." The explanation of the latter aspect would seem to be essential for our discussion. Cf. ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, p. 80.

³⁴ GStAPKB, I HA, Rep. 76, I, Sekt. 28A, No. 16, k. 44: Zedlitz do Koppa, Berlin, 21.10.1891 (copy). Cf. TRZECIAKOWSKI, "Geneza powołania," 87–88; 89–90.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, k. 43, Kopp to Zedlitz, Wrocław, 19.10.1891.

mission of being mediator between the Prussian government and the candidate for the post of Archbishop.

However, there are grounds for allowing the conclusion that the Polish side had taken into consideration the candidature of Fr. Stablewski much earlier, at least from the autumn of 1890. It was then that Stablewski made a journey to Rome, and the Catholic press, both Polish and German, unanimously wrote about the necessity of filling St Wojciech's bishopric with a bishop of Polish nationality.³⁶

Fr. Kłos, who was well informed, wrote later that in September 1890 serious talks also took place between Chancellor Caprivi and two members of the Circle [the Polish Circle in Berlin, W.M.], who wrote down its main topics in order to remember some details better.³⁷ The conversation mainly revolved around the list of candidates for the archbishopric. Caprivi assumed that all the candidates put on the list by the Chapters are persons minus gratae. However, in Caprivi's opinion, which undoubtedly expressed the Monarch's own, the Polish nationality of a candidate was not to be an obstacle to achieving the scarlet dress of a cardinal. But when one of the interlocutors mentioned the name of Fr. Stablewski as a possible candidate, the Chancellor bridled and answered: "It is out of the question, it would be crowning the opposition"³⁸

Despite so firm an opposition from the Prussian government (and Caprivi only expressed its opinion) as early as the first exploratory talks the thoughts about the candidacy of Stablewski were not yet abandoned in Polish circles. He himself, from the autumn of 1890, was also being prepared and accustomed to the possibility that his candidature may be taken into consideration. This is proven by e.g. two letters written by his close school and seminary friend, Fr. Augustyn Jaskulski, who on 29th November 1890 ensured the Września parish priest that the universally known hostility of the Prussian government against Stablewski's person did not have to be the ultimate obstacle for his nomination:

And haven't jumps, sudden and unexpected leaps from one pole to the opposite happened in politics? If the Government wants to give a Pole, would they be so absurd as to give one who, in political life, is the most outstanding, the purest representative of Polishness, who has the most perfect political sight and looks for a *modus vivendi* with the Government? The Government would even take an exceptionally wise step, one that would exceptionally oblige us, Poles, if they did it. We would have to be thankful, firstly, because

³⁶ Opinions of the German press favorable to the Polish candidate were systematically quoted by *Dziennik Poznański*, e.g. No. 207 (10.09), No. 208 (11.09) 1890. In turn, *Kurier Poznański* presented the state of both dioceses in a positive light, which allowed to entrust their leadership to a candidate of Polish nationality, cf. No. 206, 7.09.1890.

³⁷ They were Dr. Roman Komierowski and Count Hektor Kwilecki.

³⁸ *Arcybiskupa Floriana Okszy Stablewskiego Mowy żałobne*, LXIV.

they gave us a Pole, and secondly, that they gave us such a Pole who knows about the ar-
cana and... the art of ruling, or call it the art of diplomacy (which Poland has never had,
unhappily). Truly, this would be an amazingly bold, but also artistically brilliant, move on
the political chessboard, if the Government did it [...].³⁹

At first Stablewski did not treat this information seriously; he even ac-
cused his friend of telling him “tales” spread only in order to ridicule him.⁴⁰

At that time Fr. Jaskulski was the parish priest in the village parish
Biezdrow situated about 5 kilometers from Wronki and, as he himself wrote,
“was cut off from the world and heard little,” but he maintained a lot of con-
tacts as a member of the Poznań Society of Friends of Learning and was a
popular Catholic feature writer. In a letter to Stablewski he referred to a letter
from a very serious source “that would have to be credible for everybody.”⁴¹

As the period of vacancy in the archbishopric was prolonged, Sta-
blewski’s speculations about the real chances of his election were ever more
probable. It is not known if the elites of the Poznań conservatives headed by
Józef Kościelski had any immediate talks with him, but it is not very proba-
ble. In any case, about the middle of 1891 Fr. Stablewski became convinced
that his candidature would be taken into consideration⁴² and in accordance
with these speculations he started performing public conciliatory acts to-
wards the government. A typical example of this was a fact which was com-

³⁹ The Archdiocesan Archive in Poznań [further quotations: AAP], sign. AL 52, both letters
No. 38 and 39 (of 29 and 30. 11.1890) are written with the same hand and only signed “Your
brother Fr. J.”, but it is nearly certain that Fr. Jaskulski was the author. In the conclusion of the
first, the author wrote directly: “If the matter is given to S[chlötzer?], as I assume, and which was
desired by Fr. Lik[owski], in any case you will be put forward by Rome and the battle will be
about your person, and whether you will win or be defeated, I do not know. I and my source be-
lieve that it will happen the way we wish.”

⁴⁰ Ibid., the second letter of 30.11.1890.

⁴¹ Fr. Augustyn Jaskulski (Jaskólski) 1841–1906. The biographical entry in: *Księga społeczni-
cy w Wielkopolsce 1894–1919. Słownik biograficzny* [Priests – Community Workers in Greater
Poland 1894–1919. A Biographical Dictionary], vol. II (Gniezno: Gaudentinum, 2007), 45–48.
After Stablewski had been elected to the archbishopric Fr. Jaskulski belonged to the circle of his
close associates.

⁴² In a letter to Cardinal Ledóchowski of 10.06.1891 Stablewski wrote: “From Fr. Łukowski
I learned that, allegedly, I was also on the list of candidates for the archbishopric presented to the
Holy Father. When I heard about this I was completely confused. I had never expected this; in
our conversations in Rome Eminentissimus Dominus himself was kind enough to express his re-
gret that my candidature was impossible...” Quoted after: ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 78. Al-
though this news was not true, Stablewski did not know about it. Since, in the months following,
J. Kościelski officially presented his candidature in the Berlin political circles, this could not have
happened against the will of the person involved. The talks mentioned took place in Rome in the
autumn of 1890. Cf. TRZECIAKOWSKI, “Geneza powołania,” 89.

pletely ignored by historians – that at the beginning of July of the same year Stablewski, on his own initiative, introduced in his parish in Września additional sermons for German Catholics, although their number in the parish was few.⁴³

Another example was Stablewski's speech, often quoted and commented on by historians, delivered at the Polish Catholics' rally in Toruń on 27th September 1891.⁴⁴ It is also worth stressing that the significance of this speech was not contained in the range and degree of the declared concessions to the government (that in fact were not numerous), but in the declaration of loyalty and readiness for cooperation that was expressed in it. In other words: in his speech Stablewski implied that the Prussian authorities might count on him (contrary to Bishop Likowski), precisely as his friend had suggested a year before. "The government could even say [to themselves]: You are looking for a *modus vivendi*, you are not an enemy of our state [...] you push Moscow away, so you can be elected to the archbishopric and rule according to your best understanding and conscience, for you do not lack either the political talent or ecclesiastical merits."⁴⁵

It may be then assumed that in all probability Fr. Prelate Stablewski, as an expert and brilliant politician (which nobody denied), noticed an exceptional chance to win the government's favor and enhance his chances for the nomination. The readiness to cooperate with the Prussian authorities that

⁴³ This fact that is astonishing to historians, because of the small number of German Catholics in the Września parish, becomes clear in the context of the debate in the Prussian Parliament in 1890 (18–19.03 and 18–19.04), in which the then Minister of Religion, Gossler, complained about the discrimination against German Catholics practiced by the Polish clergy. Even *Kurier Poznański* (No. 152, 8.07.1891) was surprised by Stablewski's decision, and trying to defend him the newspaper stressed that the prelate carried out his Catholic and clerical duties, providing an example for the German clergy who were not willing to make similar gestures towards Polish Catholics. *Orełdownik* (No. 164, 21.07.1891) expressed its critical attitude towards this decision, suspecting in German sermons delivered in purely Polish parishes a threat to maintaining Polish national identity. The issue must have aroused some controversies in Polish society, since as early as No. 157 (14.07.1891) *Kurier* published Stablewski's letter explaining the reasons for his decision. This gesture was noticed and received warmly by German public opinion and after the nomination was announced even the conservative *Kreuz Zeitung* (*Neue Preußische Zeitung*, 11.11.1891) stressed the services of the "Munich theology doctor" to pastoral work with the German Catholics, which additionally was to confirm his credibility for the government. *Dziennik Poznański*, No. 260, 13.11.1891 also repeated this information.

⁴⁴ The speech in: Roman KOMIEROWSKI, *Kola polskie w Berlinie 1847–1860* [Polish Circles in Berlin 1847–1860] (Poznań: Drukarnia Dziennika Poznańskiego, 1910), 216–229. Historians' commentaries and appraisals: TRZECIAKOWSKI, "Geneza powołania," 91; ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 79–80; ZIELIŃSKI, "Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski," 263.

⁴⁵ AAP AL. 52, No. 38: Fr. A. Jaskulski to Fr. F. Stablewski, 29.11.1890.

Stablewski publicly declared was, at the same time, the first step to undertaking that *modus vivendi* with the full knowledge that it was the basic condition of further talks about his nomination.

c) Stablewski's candidacy as an element of the Poznań conservatives' policy

Fr. Stablewski's Toruń declaration was not only an expression of his political views and his readiness for cooperation. Behind it there was the prearranged and carefully planned position of the Polish conservative bloc with Józef Kościelski at the head. From the time of Bismarck's resignation kindly received at the Berlin court, he had tried to organize in the Poznań region a broader political bloc, contemptuously called "the court party," that in return for the softening of the Germanization policy would support the government's policies. To realize his plans, Kościelski needed a person who would be credible both for the government and for broad masses of Polish society. These conditions were ideally met by Florian Stablewski: he was a man of experience, a little aristocratically supercilious,⁴⁶ with impeccable manners and refinement, and at the same time an ardent orator with an ornate, very "Polish" (nobleman's) way of speaking, unambiguously identified with the struggle for the rights of the Church and the Polish nation in the Prussian parliament. In this sense, Stablewski was credible for both sides (Polish society and the government), and at the same time, as has already been said, he was not politically self-reliant, without real influence and a strong position among the clergy and political elites of the Poznań region. He remained in the shadow of Bishop Likowski, the Poznań canons, and even of his fellow-deputy, Fr. Ludwik Jażdżewski.⁴⁷ Hence it may be suspected that by putting forward Stablewski's candidature Kościelski rather wanted to use him for his own political aims, being convinced that it would be he who would play the main part behind the Archbishop's back. It is quite probable that from August 1891 in the Berlin ruling circles Kościelski made numerous efforts in order to force Stablewski's candidature without informing the person in-

⁴⁶ Paulia Cegielska, in *Z moich wspomnień. Przechadzki po mieście* [From My Memories. Walks Around Town] (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Miejskie Posnania, 1997), 183, noted that when, during a stay in her home, one of Stablewski's former friends addressed him as "Florek," he answered: "Not Florek now, but Archbishop."

⁴⁷ GStAPKB, I HA, Rep. 76, I. Sekt. 28A, No. 16, k. 44: Zedlitz to Kopp, Berlin, 21.10.1891 (copy): "Er [Stablewski W.M.] gehört der polnischen Adelspartei an u. man behauptet, dass er sowohl zu Likowski wie von Jażdżewski in einem gewissen inneren Gegensatz stände. Beides ist mir zweifelhaft u. jedenfalls wohl als ein geringerer Grad von gegenseitiger Sympathie in Rechnung zu stellen."

volved about the details of his efforts. This is testified to by a letter written by Kościelski to Stablewski from Berlin on 3rd November 1891, that is, four days after all the press wrote about Stablewski's candidature: "For a month I have known that your nomination depends on Rome agreeing to certain conditions; it was then that I had an occasion to say that these conditions should have an equivalent and that only your candidature can be the reason why they can be accepted; any other one is too weak to tip the scales."⁴⁸

The political offer made by Kościelski in Berlin and by Stablewski in Toruń was accepted by the government quite early, and the *modus vivendi* expected by both sides started to become a reality. In the middle of October 1891 a (secret) decision was made at the highest level of the Prussian authorities about putting forward Stablewski's candidature. On 20th October the Prussian envoy at the Vatican was able to inform Berlin about the Pope's agreement to this candidature.⁴⁹

d) The government's conditions for the *modus vivendi*

The Prussian government realized that Stablewski's nomination would be received as a serious concession to Rome, and that is why they demanded from the Pope adequate compensation. It was to be the nomination of the German General Vicar in Poznań and the cardinal's hat for the mediator in these negotiations, Georg Kopp.⁵⁰ The former postulate soon gained Leo XIII's acceptance – although it must be added that this was outside the competence of the Pope, as it was only the future Bishop Ordinary who could do it – and he used Cardinal Ledóchowski to pass his will on to the candidate. However, the Cardinal, to the complete surprise of the Prussian envoy in Rome, supported the candidature of the German priest to this post; all in order to carry into effect the nomination of a Pole to the Archbishop's see in Poznań,⁵¹ the nomination both he and the congregation had awaited for so long. But this did not exhaust the list of expectations that Berlin presented.

The government prudently assessed the political risk connected with this nomination and cautiously approached both Stablewski's Toruń declaration and the guarantee of loyalty that was to be ensured by Kościelski's political

⁴⁸ AAP, AL. 52, No. 40.

⁴⁹ TRZECIAKOWSKI, "Geneza powołania," 91–92; ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 80–81: Stablewski's candidature was to be put forward by the Pope himself in a letter to Bishop Kopp of the 12th of October 1891, after he had abandoned Likowski's candidature.

⁵⁰ Cf. Caprivi to Schlözer, Berlin, 18.10.1891, in: GATZ, "Einführung," 146, doc. 81.

⁵¹ Cf. GATZ, "Einführung," doc. 82–83, 147–149; ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, p. 81.

bloc. The members of the ruling elite in Berlin still needed a kind of “insurance policy” that was to guarantee maintaining the most important benefits gained by the government in ecclesiastical policy in Greater Poland. The Minister of Religion Zedlitz⁵² wanted Stablewski to promise in writing, through the mediation of Kopp, to observe three points:

1. Efficiently securing pastoral work for German Catholics.
2. Keeping the rule that was formulated after painstaking negotiations with Archbishop Dinder, stating that professors of the Poznań Seminary would be nominated with the consent of the State authorities.
3. Keeping the conditions imposed earlier on the use of languages in elementary schools and in teaching religion in secondary schools.⁵³

The demand of a written promise to remain loyal before the candidate was officially approved by the government, had appeared in the practice of the Prussian authorities even earlier, although it was not justified by either canon law or in state law.⁵⁴ At the time of the vacancy at the archdiocese after removing Ledóchowski, the Prussian authorities found a loyal candidate for his successor in the person of the provost of the Pelplin cathedral, Gustaw Wanjura. However, even in this situation, before officially putting forward his candidature in Rome, on 16th April 1884 the then Minister of Religion Gossler met Wanjura secretly on a train in order to become convinced by personal conversation that he was fully loyal to the state authority. On the next day Wanjura himself sent a servile letter to Gossler and in the letter he assured the Minister of his loyalty to the monarch and to the government.⁵⁵ On the contrary, the nomination of Julius Dinder was accepted promptly and unexpectedly and this was why the Minister of Religion did not manage to have a proper talk with the candidate. Only after the official nomination did one of the ministry clerks have one.⁵⁶ Following this, the Minister of Religion prepared a secret and treacherous procedure of receiving a written commitment from Stablewski to observe the government’s conditions.

⁵² Robert Count Zedlitz und Trützschler was Minister of Religion, Education and Medicine from 13 March 1891 to 21 March 1892.

⁵³ ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 81–83.

⁵⁴ The law only ordered that the candidate approved by both sides before taking office should pay homage to the king in front of him or his representative.

⁵⁵ See MATWIEJCZYK, *Niemieccy katolicy w Poznańskim*, 132. Despite a lot of servile phrases, Wanjura did not make any tangible commitments to the state authorities.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 140–141.

3. DECLARATION OF LOYALTY AS A CONDITION *SINE QUA NON* OF THE NOMINATION?

Fr. Prelate Stablewski was not an ordinary parish priest from a remote village parish who might be simply presented with the government conditions to be accepted. Hence, such an intermediary was chosen who could guarantee the success of this undertaking. The intermediary was the Prince-Bishop of Wrocław who had considerable standing in Church circles and at the same time was known for his absolute loyalty to the government. Kopp first informed Stablewski on 23rd October about the intended nomination by the government and invited him to pay him a visit. For the next two days Stablewski hesitated about entering into negotiations with Kopp.⁵⁷ Finally, Stablewski came to Wrocław on 26th October and a serious conversation between him and the host of the bishop's palace took place.⁵⁸

Unfortunately, we do not know if, and possibly how Stablewski was prepared for this conversation. We also do not know if he came to Wrocław with some synopsis of his declaration, or if he wrote it during the conversation under the watchful eye of the host.⁵⁹ From the ecclesiastical-legal point of view he might refuse any secret talks with the government, because they might give the appearance of simony. The government realized this and this is exactly why they chose Wrocław for the negotiations as it was far from Berlin, and the astute and obedient Bishop Kopp.

Neither for the government nor for Kopp was Stablewski an equal partner, and by the very fact of entering into secret talks he found himself on a politically slippery ground where he was completely alone, without actual knowledge about the state of the negotiations in Rome and without any powerbase that could strengthen his position. From Ledóchowski's and Kościel-ski's letters to Stablewski, it unambiguously follows that when entering into talks in Wrocław he did not know that on 23rd October he was already a candidate approved by both sides and his election was guaranteed, or that his protector, Cardinal Ledóchowski, knew about it and had accepted it.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 82.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ In his letter to Minister of Religion Zedlitz of 26.10.1891 (GStAPKB, I HA, Rep. 76, I Sekt. 28A, No. 16, k. 47) Kopp only writes that Stablewski "has just signed" his declaration. From a later letter written by Stablewski to Ledóchowski it follows that, before signing, the text of the declaration was agreed on with Bishop Kopp and his secretary Canon Franz. The original, written by hand, has the clear features of a fair copy carefully written by Stablewski and it was dated "Wreschen den 26 Oktober 1891"; see the annex at the end.

⁶⁰ Stablewski's hesitation before he made the decision about going to Wrocław proves that he did not have enough knowledge of the situation. He probably waited for information from

Having received the demand for a written promise to observe the government conditions that the Wrocław Bishop presented him with, Stablewski only wrote a statement that was a declaration of his loyalty. Formally, it was not a promise or oath in return for receiving the rank of archbishop. However, *de facto* he accepted in it all of the conditions that had been laid down.⁶¹

The declaration consisted of three parts concerning the substance of the issue: the first, general, one was an expression of loyalty to the state authorities and of the author's constant political beliefs, from which, as he stated, it was easy to deduce his attitude towards the government's three conditions. A discussion of these conditions is the second part of the declaration. And finally, in the third and last part he requests that the form of his statement would be treated as satisfying, so that he would not be asked to make formal promises and that the document should remain strictly secret.

Up until now, in historiography the charges against Stablewski were made mainly because of the first part of his statement:

It is not because of an outer constraint but of an inner compulsion that I feel obliged to faithfully support the government's actions aimed at strengthening the state and the prosperity of all its citizens. [...] I have also accepted that for the former Polish provinces being part of the Prussian Crown and of Germany is an absolute necessity, for which all German soldiers will give their lives, and that separating these provinces or even distinguishing them politically, for any politically thinking man would be an impossible combination. This is why, according to my deepest, not only religious but also political beliefs, we, Polish subjects, also have to stand by the Emperor and the Reich equally firmly and faithfully as their German subjects and we have to be ready for any sacrifices in the interest of the security and defense of the state.

Furthermore, he justified his theses by saying that he had expressed this attitude both in his public speeches and in private conversations; and this is

Ledóchowski. Ledóchowski, after a talk with the Pope, in a letter of 25th October informed Stablewski about the nomination that awaited him and about the necessity of nominating a German General Vicar, without leaving Stablewski any space for making his own decision: "So Providence has chosen you to indirectly take up my legacy, and my soul became joyful as I know that it goes to good hands. [...] I do not know if the government has already let you know that your person has ultimately been chosen for our orphaned see. The Holy Father, on whose order I am writing to you, wishes that you keep the matter secret until it is announced in the usual way." Quoted after: KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 166). Thus it is impossible that the letter could have reached Września before Stablewski's journey to Wrocław. Cf. MATWIEJCZYK, *Niemieccy katolicy w Poznańskim*, 249.

⁶¹ Commentaries and appraisals of this document in: ŚMIGIEL, *Florian Stablewski*, 82–83; ZIELIŃSKI, "Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski," 261–263; Matwiejczyk, *Niemieccy katolicy w Poznańskim*, 250–254; IDEM, *Tragizm ugody*, 710–713. The text of Stablewski's statement has never been published *in extenso*. The further quotations come from the text in Annex 1 to the present article.

why from this general declaration it is easy to draw detailed conclusions as to the demands that had been made of him.

The above words, which for Adam Galos were a declaration of settlement exceeding the limits of legalism,⁶² in fact expressed the views of a man who did not run for the position of the leader of a party or of a movement that aimed at changing political reality, but for a shepherd of the Church, to which he was supposed to secure safe survival⁶³ after the painful experience of the *Kulturkampf*, in the new conditions of “reconciliation” with the Poles as declared by the government. Stablewski appraised that, in the foreseeable future, a change of the geopolitical *status quo* in Europe would not take place, and his generation would live in the Prussian state; hence, making that life possibly tolerable from the religious and national aspect was the most important task. The method of achieving this aim was finding that “*modus vivendi*” with the Prussian government. Certainly, recognizing the integrity of the Prussian state was the price.

Stablewski assumed that the constitution and the person of the Emperor were a guarantee of religious freedom in Prussia, and this is why neither he, as the Archbishop, nor his Polish diocesans were in a hopeless position and, contrary to despotic Russia, in Prussia there were real chances for using legal methods to defend one’s own religious and national identity.

The second part of the declaration has not been the subject of specific criticism from historians, but it is exactly this part that has the key significance for comprehending the importance and meaning of the whole.

The candidate for the see of the primates of Poland declared his readiness to meet the religious needs of German Catholics by preparing German children to receive the holy sacraments and by delivering sermons in the German language. He accepted the hard-won rules, after negotiations with Archbishop Dinder, of nominating professors of the Seminary with the consent of the lay authorities and of teaching religion in secondary schools according to the conditions that had been imposed by the government. The only clear avoidance that he made was in the issue of elementary schools. Indeed, he stressed that “in school education the task of every arch-pastor, especially in our times, must be to make efforts hand-in-hand with the gov-

⁶² GALOS, *Tragizm ugody*, 238–239: “At that time it is one of few statements for settlement with such a character formulated outside the reach of the Polish opinion. [...] Stablewski moved further than other representatives (apart from a few) of the Polish movement towards giving up any changes of the political status quo in the Polish lands. Deputies often stressed that Poles loyally meet their commitments to the state, but they did not make any declarations as to the future.”

⁶³ Cf. ZIELIŃSKI, “Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski,” 263–264.

ernment, through forming firm religious foundations to educate young people to be good Christians and good subjects,” but he did not make any concrete promises. On the other hand, he did not show even the smallest reservation that religion lessons in elementary schools should be conducted in the children’s native language.⁶⁴

It may be assumed that Stablewski did not enter into any negotiations with Kopp and he did not lay down his own conditions, since the government’s deviousness in arranging this conversation also consisted in the fact that, formally, Kopp was not a side in the negotiations. Stablewski focused only on pinning down a proper form of his written declaration. His gravest fear was that his declaration could be understood as a concrete promise or oath in return for obtaining the archbishopric. These thoughts did not allow him to sleep long after he had signed the document. After his return to Poznań he wrote a letter to Ledóchowski assuring him that both Bishop Kopp and Canon Franz had read his declaration several times and confirmed that there was no promise in it.⁶⁵ He comforted himself, writing to Ledóchowski: “I think I may boldly show this document to anybody if it were necessary, and at the same time declare that I did not make any promises to the government.”⁶⁶ It must also be added that the candidate for the position of archbishop proved to be fully loyal to his protector in Rome. Not only did he inform him about the fact and course of the talks in Wrocław, but also he sent him a French translation of the “statement” that was designed for the Cardinal Secretary of State M. Rampoll himself.⁶⁷ In his letter to Ledóchowski he also assured the addressee that in case of his negative opinions, he was prepared to resign and cancel his statement any time.

The fact that Stablewski was indignant about the news in the German newspapers, which as early as 31st October (before the official decision) in-

⁶⁴ This was Ledóchowski’s main condition in 1873, and Stablewski himself many times formulated this postulate in the Prussian Parliament.

⁶⁵ Kopp confirmed this quite independently in his letter to the Minister of Religion written immediately after Stablewski signed the declaration on 26.10.1891 (GStAPKB, I HA, Rep. 76, I Sekt. 28A, No. 16, k. 47): “Soeben geht Stablewski fort, nachdem er die Einlage unterschrieben hat. Ich glaube, dass er nicht mehr tun darf, um sich nicht dem Vorwürfe auszusetzen, dass er Zusagen abgegeben und dadurch den erzbischöflichen Stuhl von Posen erlangt habe. Likowski wird ohnehin ein solches Gerücht zu verbreiten suchen.”

⁶⁶⁶ The letter to Cardinal Ledóchowski of 29.10.1891. Quoted after: K. Śmigiel, *Florian Stablewski*, 83–83. However, the Prussian administration did not have such scruples or such subtlety and bluntly entitled Stablewski’s statement “Zusagen” (Bundesarchiv Berlin, R. 43, No. 890, k. 103) or even “Wahlkapitulation von Stablewskis vom 26.10.1891” (Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, No. R. 3990, p. 56).

⁶⁷ A synopsis signed by Stablewski in: AAP, AL. 52, No. 6.

formed their readers about the acceptance of his candidature, proves that he treated his words seriously and that he really was waiting for a reply from Rome. Personally (albeit in secret) he intervened in "Kurier Poznański" and ordered that, in the issue of 1st November, on the front page, there had to appear a statement in spaced-out print that would give him a chance to back out of the decisions that he had made:

In view of the negotiations held by the Apostolic See with the Prussian cabinet on the issue of filling our archbishopric sees, we consider it to be proper to be restrained in repeating names, which is only based on gossip and speculation. As soon as the issue is settled there will be proper time to deal with it as part of the journalist's duty. Today we understand how unpleasant a thing it must be to toss the names of people into journalists' debate, when the future may show that the speculations about them were completely wrong.⁶⁸

In a similar tone he wrote to his political protector Józef Kościelski who stayed in Berlin, informing him about his talks in Wrocław, the dilemmas resulting from them, and he regretted the untimely press speculations about him.⁶⁹

The Września parish priest must have been very much surprised when he read both replies: Ledóchowski promptly, and in a simple way, reassured the future Archbishop's conscience. In his letter of 12th November 1891 he wrote: "You did not contribute in any way to your election and you may clearly see in it God's will."⁷⁰

In turn, Kościelski, in a letter from Berlin (3rd November 1891), fairly broadly and in detail described his services in the negotiations at the highest level that were crowned by Stablewski's nomination⁷¹:

Dear Florian. Your anxiety is exaggerated. I sent telegrams to our newspapers, and this was at the wish of the higher side. [...] Now at the time I have been here I have had several conferences with C[aprivi], who felt anxious about how things would turn out in R[ome]. This is why I went to Edw. F. (?) explaining everything extensively to him and asking him to send a telegram to me immediately when the decision is made to agree to Berlin's conditions. I received the telegram yesterday evening and at once I went to C[aprivi]. The point was, as has already happened a few times, to prepare the opinion and to this aim I had to report the fact to the press. Anyway, this very thing has already been decided by Rome's agreement and your nomination is an accomplished fact. [...] Nobody

⁶⁸ Quoted after: *Arcybiskupa Floriana Okszy Stablewskiego Mowy żałobne*, LXVI.

⁶⁹ The content of Stablewski's letter is only supposed on the basis of Kościelski's reply: AAP, AL. 52, No. 10, Berlin, 3.11.1891.

⁷⁰ Quoted after: KARŁOWSKI, *Z dziejów elekcji*, 167.

⁷¹ He soon expected proper compensation for these services; in a letter written just after Stablewski's preconization he asked the Archbishop to arrange for him an order from the Pope: AAP, AL 52, No. 30, Kościelski to Stablewski, Berlin, 22.12.1891.

may accuse you of pursuing the nomination, for as I have said, it is an accomplished fact, although it will not be announced for another 8–10 days. I will take your information to “Germania” today. Believe me, everything that happened, happened after thorough consideration and it had to be done.⁷²

From both letters a happy, but also unpleasant, message followed: the former is that he did not have to withdraw his declaration or resign from the archbishopric, because in the great diplomatic game being played his declaration of loyalty was an act that was meaningless, and neither of his two protectors paid much attention to it, as they assumed in advance that he would sign it. However, from the same facts another message followed, an unpleasant one, that he was only a pawn in the game; the main negotiations were conducted behind his back, without his participation or knowledge.

We do not know to what degree Stablewski was conscious of this and how it influenced his later attitude and decisions. From Stablewski’s Prussian official and private letters it shows that in the first weeks after the nomination he behaved rather emotionally and chaotically, as if the situation was beyond his strength. Even Kopp’s secretary, Canon Franz who had a liking for him, advised him in his letter of 6th November 1891: “Aequam memento rebus in arduiservarementem [non secus in bonis].”⁷³

From the whole series of events presented above, a lasting, and hard to rationally explain, conviction remained in Stablewski’s mind that Bishop Kopp had provided special services for his nomination.⁷⁴ He also invited Kopp to be the main celebrant at his consecration as Archbishop in Gniezno; he turned to him for help and advice in various situations, ignoring the fact that Kopp was often disloyal to him and openly represented the Prussian government’s position.

Finally, it is worth stressing that the Prussian authorities did not disregard the declaration that Stablewski signed, calling it simply “Zusagen” (promises)⁷⁵ or even “Wahlkapitulation von Stablewskis vom 26.10.1891” (election surrender).⁷⁶ In the files of the Reich Chancellery and the Prussian Ministry

⁷² AAP, AL. 52, No. 10, Berlin, 3.11.1891.

⁷³ Ibid., No. 17, Franz to Stablewski, Breslau, 6.11.1891: “Remember to keep a tranquil mind when times are bad or good” Horace, Ode II, 3.

⁷⁴ In a later conversation with J. Bilczewski, the Lvov Archbishop, Stablewski confessed: “I owe becoming archbishop to Kopp and Kopp’s opinion may also influence the Polish cause.” Cf. MATWIEJCZYK, *Niemieccy katolicy w Poznańskiem*, 250.

⁷⁵ Bundesarchiv Berlin, R. 43, No. 890, k. 103.

⁷⁶ Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, No. R. 3990, p. 56. This was a medieval legal term describing the written commitments made by a candidate for the post of bishop before taking office.

of Religion all of Stablewski's concessions and decisions to the benefit of the government were meticulously recorded so that his successor could sign the whole lot before his nomination. From the above it may be concluded that in 1891 the Prussian authorities undertook a diplomatic operation that made it possible to achieve all of the intended aims. Firstly, an archbishop was elected who was accepted by all the interested sides. Secondly, the election secured the parliamentary support of the Polish political elites for the Prussian government for the next four years. Thirdly, the election of the Polish candidate did not strengthen the Polish camp, because, bound by its secret promises, it guaranteed in both archdioceses the continuity of the Church policy formulated by the legislation of the *Kulturkampf*. It is obvious, then, that in this complicated game signing the declaration by Stablewski was a *sine qua non* condition for accepting his candidature by the Prussian authorities.

4. THE CONTENT OF THE DECLARATION: CONCLUSIONS AND APPRAISALS

An appraisal of the contents of the signed declaration is rather difficult, because – as attempts were made above to show – it cannot be separated from its historical context. In writing the declaration Stablewski acted cautiously and diplomatically; he tried to weigh his words, dodged and used general phrases, for instance that he would support the government's actions "that aim at securing the prosperity of all citizens." As he himself stressed, his declaration was only a repetition of the views that he had expressed earlier. In detailed issues (the Seminary, secondary education) he showed much insight into the modern relations between the state and the Church and sound knowledge of them in "their" future archdioceses. Since these conditions were approved by Rome there was no ground and no reasons for rejecting them.

The only charge that could be made against Stablewski is the lack of a postulate to at least partly restore the Polish language in elementary education. After all, he was an expert in this field, he addressed parliamentary questions and wrote memoranda. On the other hand, Stablewski as a deputy witnessed not only debates held in the Prussian parliament on this issue, in which even in spring 1891 he himself took part, but he also saw the first changes for the better when on 11th April of the same year, by ministerial order, the ban on giving private Polish lessons in school buildings was abolished. It was then

(in spring 1891) that, during a debate on the colonization law, when Polish deputies demanded a departure from Bismarck's policy in this field, Chancellor Caprivi replied:

We are cautious and do not leave the firm ground to go to an unknown land, being led by our new friends. However, we do not want to repel you, on the contrary, we have made concessions in a few minor questions; just progress on the way to reconciliation and you will make a further concession from the government possible.⁷⁷

It may be assumed that this motto also guided Stablewski when he signed the declaration. It is a pity, however, that at the crucial moment he did not run the risk of stating his own conditions to the government. This is why in the declaration there is at least a seed of conflict, which, with time, led to the schoolchildren's strike in Września, and it was only then that the government reminded the Archbishop that he had accepted the government's policies long before.

In turn, the conditions stated by the government to Stablewski were not accidental. The direction in which the language policy in elementary education went was defined as early as 1873 and it was consistently stuck to,⁷⁸ and Stablewski's consent was to secure its continuity and acceptance by the new Church hierarchy. The remaining points, in the way that was intended by the government, introduced elements of national conflicts into the Church's life and the administration of the dioceses, according to the rule "*divide et impera*." The German Vicar General, the government's acceptance of the Seminary professors, and raising German Catholics to the rank of a separate group whose pastoral work was watched over by the government – all of this gave the state authorities the possibility to interfere in the Church's internal affairs. Hence Zieliński's appraisal is just (contrary to other historians) when he says that Stablewski's statement "was essential for his nomination."⁷⁹ Its importance for the Prussian government was also increased by the fact that it was a form of declaration with a secret character, and the author himself asked the government to keep it strictly secret.⁸⁰ The future archbishop

⁷⁷ KOMIEROWSKI, *Kola polskie*, 202.

⁷⁸ Cf. Witold MATWIEJCZYK, "Język polski w szkołach powszechnych i średnich prowincji poznańskiej 1871–1887 [The Polish Language in Elementary and Secondary Schools in the Poznań Province 1871–1887]," in *Archiva Temporum Testes. Źródła historyczne jako podstawa pracy badacza dziejów. Księga pamiątkowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Stanisławowi Olczakowi* [Archiva Temporum Testes. Historical Sources as the Foundation of the Work of a History Researcher], ed. G. Bujak et al. (Lublin: Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, 2008), 305–325.

⁷⁹ ZIELIŃSKI, "Arcybiskup Florian Stablewski," 263.

⁸⁰ Although the oath of fealty sworn by Stablewski in January 1892 in front of Wilhelm II as the King of Prussia had a subservient character to a greater degree, it did not contain a reference

signed it under pressure from the authority of his host, and being conscious of the great political role that had fallen to him, but this did not change the fact that he was deeply affected by his act. Hence the question appears, what made him take that step?

The motives for making this decision probably had a triple character: personal, ecclesiastical-religious and political. In the group of personal reasons, Stablewski's family and his financial situation has to be stressed. It was generally known that he came from an impoverished branch of the celebrated Stablewski family⁸¹ and that he owed his education to Archbishop Przyłuski's scholarship. His nomination to the post of the Gniezno and Poznań Archbishop (the Primate of Poland) gave him the only chance to get his revenge on this unfair fate. It was through his person that the Stablewski family returned to one of the highest ecclesiastical and state ranks in the tradition of the Polish state.⁸²

Secondly, Stablewski was a priest and the ambitions and aspirations to raise his position in the Church hierarchy were not alien to him. In the rank of Archbishop he also achieved everything as a clergyman. And, finally, the political motives. Stablewski was convinced that Prussia's civilization and culture were superior compared to those of Russia, which, in his public speeches, he charged with despotism and a lack of religious tolerance. He was certain that the fate of Poles should be bound up with one of the most modern and dynamically developing states in Europe, with the "state of the

to specific points of the government's policy. It was also a "ritual" formula that was invariably delivered by newly sworn-in bishops until World War I, and it had an open character. Its text is in: GStAPKB, I HA, Rep. 76, Sekt. 1a, Abt. II, No. 1, vol. 6, k. 141–147. The report of the course of the celebration signed by Stablewski and other participants in the ceremony, k. 144–146. The text of Stablewski's oath: "[...]und besonders dahin streben will, dass in den Gemütern der meiner bischöflichen Leitung anvertrauten Geistlichen und Gemeinden die Gesinnungen der Ehrfurcht und Treue gegen den König, die Liebe zum Vaterlande, der Gehorsam gegen die Gesetze und alle jene Tugenden, die in dem Christen den guten Untertan bezeichnen, mit Sorgfalt gepflegt werden, und dass ich nicht dulden will, dass von der mir untergebenen Geistlichkeit in entgegengesetztem Sinne gelehrt und gehandelt werde. Insbesondere gelobe ich, dass ich keine Gemeinschaft oder Verbindung, sei es innerhalb oder außerhalb Landes, unterhalten will, welche der öffentlichen Sicherheit gefährlich sein könnten, und will, wenn ich erfahren sollte, dass in meinen Diözesen oder anderswo Anschläge gemacht werden, die zum Nachteil des Staates gereichen könnten, hiervon Seiner Königlichen Majestät Anzeige machen [..]." The criticism of the contents of the oath presented by Adam Galos ("Tragizm ugody," 239) and Kazimierz Śmigiel (*Florian Stablewski*, 87–88) is utterly groundless, because Stablewski had no influence on it.

⁸¹ Cf. MOLIK, "Biografia arcybiskupa Floriana Stablewskiego," 110–111; KWILECKI, "Stablewscy herbu Oksza," 250–251.

⁸² KWILECKI, "Stablewscy herbu Oksza," 251. "The person of Archbishop Florian Stablewski boosted the prestige of the Stablewski family in the Poznań region."

law” (*Rechtsstaat*), which the Reich was. Hence the sense of mission that had fallen on him, a mission leading to the reconciliation of Poles and the Prussian government that had started to depart from Bismarck’s policy of Germanization.⁸³

It was probably these motives that made Stablewski go to Wrocław and sign the oath of fealty to the Prussian government. The importance of the above arguments and the widespread satisfaction and acceptance, or even enthusiasm, from the Polish society that were expressed soon after the nomination was announced allowed him to promptly salve his conscience and inner dilemmas.

And finally the question that has to be left as an open one: did Fr. Stablewski’s written declaration bring about the results intended by the government, that is, was it really a tool that disciplined the Archbishop’s actions in the spirit of obedience to the Prussian government?

There are no specific historical proofs of this and, at the present stage of research, it seems quite doubtful. It is certain that, as early as the moment of signing it, he was conscious of the consequences and results of making specific promises and that is why, in the conclusion of his declaration, he asked to be exempted from them and he explained: “Formal promises that are hard to keep secret in the future [...] weaken any archbishop in his fruitful work for the justified interests of the state, depriving him of energy and confidence in the face of opposing currents acting in the diocese.”

As was mentioned above, Stablewski’s declaration was general in its character and in practice its execution depended solely on the author’s good will. Even though its secrecy in extreme cases could become a source for blackmail, for Stablewski it was rather an asset. Revealing the document would be not only a threat of embarrassment greater for the government than for the author, but also of diplomatic repercussions in Rome. In other words: the government had an argument against Stablewski that they could practically not use. And finally, when during the Archbishop’s illness in 1900 the Prussian authorities conducted painstaking search for a successor, the Minister of Religion wrote:

And what concerns the oaths that the state authorities should require from the future archbishop, for my part I would like to advise them against placing excessive demands on the government’s candidate. Cardinal Kopp and Archbishop Stablewski justly warned against

⁸³ Stablewski’s political views are fairly accurately reflected in his interview with the *Franfurter Zeitung* No. 274, 30.09.1892. Cf. also: NEUBACH, *Der Gnesen-Posener Erzbischof Florian v. Stablewski*, 113–123.

it during the election of the latter in 1891. [...] Moreover, I would like to attach more significance to finding a trustworthy, energetic German person than to making cheap promises whose fulfillment cannot be then forced.⁸⁴

CONCLUSION

The putting forward of the candidature of Florian Stablewski was caused by a series of events, efforts and decisions of which the Prussian authorities in Berlin were the main initiator. In rejecting the candidature of Bishop Likowski the government gave a signal that they were ready to accept a Polish candidate only on condition of his complete loyalty and readiness to cooperate. Fr. Florian Stablewski, a sophisticated and experienced politician realized that this was a *sine qua non* condition for the nomination to the post of archbishop. This is why he started to take steps that were an unambiguous signal for the government that he was ready for such cooperation. The motives for his decision were manifold. His personal ambitions and the willingness to be promoted in the Church hierarchy were probably not as important as his political ambitions. Stablewski was a legalist and loyalist, accepting the existing political status of the German rule of law (*Rechtsstaat*). He was also certain that in this system, contrary to despotic Russia, there were legal mechanisms and guarantees of the defense of the religious and national interests of the Polish minority. The willingness to depart from Bismarck's policy of Germanization that was declared by Chancellor Caprivi's government was, for him, the only and unique chance of reconciliation, one that had to be grasped. Political support, and even a source of inspiration, for Stablewski was the political bloc of the Poznań conservatives headed by Józef Kościelski who personally undertook the mission of forcing the candidature at the Berlin court.

The willingness to cooperate with the government declared by that camp was accepted, and Stablewski's election was to seal it. However, the government wanted neither to strengthen the Polish political camp, nor to make it more independent, and this is why, in expressing their readiness to nominate Stablewski, they wanted to maintain the *status quo* in their policy toward the Church and religion. It is from there that the expectation followed that the new archbishop would fully observe the rules that had been imposed in the period of the *Kulturkampf* in the fields of pastoral work, educational

⁸⁴ PA AA, R. No. 3990, 39–48: Minister of Religion v. Studt to Chancellor Bülow, Berlin, 9.11.1904.

system and educating seminarians. The candidate's written commitment to observe these rules was to be a guarantee of his complete loyalty for the future.

Stablewski was drawn into this game (which was a hidden form of blackmail) on unequal terms, without full knowledge of the decisions that had already been made and of the diplomatic negotiations concerning his candidature. All the same, he emerged from it unscathed. Instead of accepting the terms that were imposed on him he signed a general declaration of loyalty that was already known to the public. On particular issues he accepted those solutions that had already existed in practice and did not raise Rome's reservations. Hence, it may be stated that by signing his declaration in the presence of Bishop Kopp in Wrocław he made an effort to put up some resistance to the demands made by the Prussian authorities. He did not make any promises and did not declare complete obedience.

Declaring loyalty to the legal authorities, motivated by his own ambitions, he was ready to agree to compromises that in his opinion were necessary and objective. This did not mean, however, complete obedience to the lay authorities. This he reserved only for his Church superiors, Cardinal Ledóchowski and the Pope, both during the negotiations and after concluding them. Hence it may not be stated that he exceeded the acceptable boundaries in an ecclesiastical or national dimension. Thus the charges made by Galos more than forty years ago should be at least partly revised.

ANNEX 1

The declaration by Fr. Dr. Florian Stablewski (the candidate for the post of the Gniezno and Poznań Archbishop) to the Prussian government signed in Wrocław on 26th October 1891.

Ich habe schon mehrmals Gelegenheit gehabt, die Auffassung meiner Pflichten dem Staate gegenüber offen und klar sowohl vom christlichen als auch vom politischen Standpunkte aus zu präzisieren und zwar dahin, dass ich mich nicht aus äußerem Zwange, sondern aus innerem sittlichen verpflichtet fühle, der Staatsregierung in ihrer auf die Festigung des Reiches und auf die Wollfahrt aller seiner Angehörigen gerichteten Bestrebungen treu und förderlich zur Seite zu stehen.

Zum Beweise der Identität meiner heutigen mit meinen früheren Auffassungen führe ich an, dass ich zu Lebzeiten [underlining in the original text W.M.] des seligen Erzbischofs Dinder bei Erbringung der Militärvorlage, nach dem Regierungs-Antritt Sr. Majestät unseres Allernädigsten Kaisers und Königs, in der polnischen Fraktion des Reichstages, zu deren Sitzungen ich als Landtags-Abgeordnete Zutritt habe, daselbst meinen Standpunkt meinen Kollegen klar und ausführlich auseinandersetzte und mich bemüht habe, dieselben zu einer rückhaltlosen und kräftigen Unterstützung des Reiches in seinen Aufgaben zu bewegen. Was ich in einer engeren, geschlossenen] Versammlung tat, habe ich nicht gefürchtet, auch öffentlich [underlining in the original text W.M.] meinen Landsleuten gegenüber zu vertreten, das letzte mal in Thorn.

Bei Gelegenheit einer Denkschrift in Sachen des polnischen Sprachunterrichts in den Volksschulen, habe ich die Ehre gehabt, auch Sr. Exzellenz dem Herrn Reichskanzler v. Caprivi in Gegenwart meines Kollegen v. Komierowski mündlich und später schriftlich meinen politischen Standpunkt darzulegen, und die Notwendigkeit der Zusammengehörigkeit der ehemals polnischen Landesteile mit der Krone Preußen und Deutschland als eine Lebensfrage für Preußen und Deutschland anerkannt, für welche der letzte deutsche Soldat sein Leben einsetzen müsse und dass eine Lostrennung dieser Provinzen oder selbst eine politische Sonderstellung derselben für jeden irgendwie politisch denkenden Mann eine unmögliche Kombination sei.

Meiner innersten, nicht bloß religiösen, sondern auch politischen Überzeugung nach, müssen somit wir polnische Untertanen zu Kaiser und Reich ebenso fest und treu wie die deutschen Untertanen stehen und zu allen Opfern im Interesse der Sicherung und Verteidigung des Staates willig bereit sein.

Aus dieser meiner allgemeinen Stellung lassen sich die Konsequenzen meines Verhaltens in Einzelfragen wohl leicht regeln.

Was die Seelsorge der deutschen Katholiken unter uns anbelangt, so habe ich als Pfarrer persönlich keine Mühe gescheut, um zeitweilig bloß 3 oder 4 deutschen Kindern gegenüber etwa hundert polnischen, oft mit fast demselben Zeitaufwande den Beichtund Kommunionunterricht stets persönlich von mir zu Teil werden lassen, wie den gesamten polnischen, ebenso habe ich es für meine Pflicht gehalten, meinen deutschen Parochianen das Wort Gottes in Ihrer Sprache zu verkünden und halte diese aus meiner kirchlichen Überzeugung hervorgehende Übung für die Pflicht eines katholischen Seelsorgers. Was das Klerikal-Seminar anbelangt, so bin ich der Überzeugung, dass die unter Billigung des Papstes hierüber getroffenen Vereinbarungen mit der königlichen Staatsregierung auch für den Nachfolger des Erzbischofs Dinder verbindlich sind.

Auf dem Gebiete der Schule muß die Aufgabe eines jeden Oberhirten stets sein, um so mehr aber in unserer Zeit, Hand in Hand mit der Staatsregierung sich zu bemühen, durch eine feste religiöse Grundlage die Jugend zu guten Christen und treuen Untertanen zu erziehen. In Betreff der bezüglich des Religionsunterrichts an höheren Anstalten bereits bestehenden Vereinbarungen wird dasselbe gelten müssen wie in Betreff des Klerikal-Seminars.

Dies der Ausdruck meiner loyalen Überzeugung und Ansicht in den urgierten Einzelfragen.

Aus Ballast der Vorkommnisse mit dem seligen Erzbischof Dinder halte ich es für meine Pflicht gerade auch [underlining in the original text W.M.] im Interesse des Staates darauf aufmerksam zu machen, dass formelle Zusagen, welche später als Geheimnis schwer zu bewahren sind u. gewöhnlich noch aufgebauscht werden, wie dies bei dem erwähnten Oberhirten der Fall war, jeden Erzbischof namentlich in seiner für die berechtigten Interessen der Staatsregierung gezielten Wirksamkeit schwächen, ihm die Sicherheit und Energie gegenüber den in der Diözese vorhandenen gegnerischen Strömungen nehmen müssen.

Aus diesem Grunde möchte ich mir erlauben ganz untertänigst zu bitten, von formalen Zusagen abzusehen und der Aufrichtigkeit der von mir dargelegten Grundsätze und Anschauungen Vertrauen schenken zu wollen.

Wreschen, den 26. Oktober 1891. Dr v. Stablewski.

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THE FR. FLORIAN STABLEWSKI'S DECLARATION OF LOYALTY
TO THE PRUSSIAN AUTHORITY OF 26 OCTOBER 1891:
BETWEEN AMBITION, NECESSITY AND OBEDIENCE

S u m m a r y

The election of Florian Stablewski as Archbishop of Gniezno and Poznań was a result of many circumstances and decisions, directed mostly by the Prussian government. After Bismarck's resignation in 1890, the Prussian authorities declared their readiness for 'reconciliation' (*Versöhnung*) with the Polish political elites in the Prussian partition, but with only the smallest possible concessions on their part. The nomination of the Polish candidate for archdioceses orphaned after the death of Juliusz Dinder was to be the first test of both parties' intentions. An experienced politician such as Fr. Stablewski perfectly understood this and after rejecting Likowski's candidature, he made public gestures towards the authorities, which were taken as an explicit declaration of loyalty and willingness to cooperate. Political support or even an inspiration for Stablewski was the political camp of Poznań conservatives led by Józef Kościelski, who personally undertook to force this candidate through at the Berlin court. The government, however, did not want to strengthen or make the Polish political camp independent. Therefore, upon expressing readiness to nominate Stablewski, they wanted to further maintain the status quo in Church and religious policy. A written commitment of the candidate to comply with these principles was to guarantee his full loyalty in the future. However, the declaration written by Stablewski was only an expression of his generally known and publicly expressed attitude of legality and loyalism. He reserved his full obedience only to his Church superiors: Cardinal Ledóchowski and the Pope.

Key words: Florian Stablewski; archbishops of Gniezno and Poznań in the 19th and 20th centuries; Catholic Church in the Prussian partition; Prussian Germanisation policy; state–Church relations in the Prussian partition in the 19th and 20th centuries.

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