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NON-DIOCESAN BISHOP OF GNIEZNO STANISŁAW BROSS

A b s t r a c t. The period of time when the Primate of Poland Stefan Wyszyński was imprisoned (1950-1953) is thought to be extremely challenging to the Polish Catholic Church. He was the head of church as well as the voice of nation who opposed the power of Communists in the country in a very explicit and radical way. After his imprisonment and isolation from the outside world, the Communist authorities started the massive infiltration and surveillance of Church. A mitred prelate, Stanisław Bross, who usurped the title of a diocesan bishop assumed power over the primate's diocese. The Institute of National Remembrance and the Archdiocese of Gniezno do not offer any evidence of Stanisław Bross cooperation with services of the Polish People's Republic. However, there are strong indications of his conscious and deliberate actions. His usurpation of the power in Church was leading to many divisions among the clergy. After the release a cardinal Wyszyński deprived the man of all dignity and ecclesiastical offices .

The following text is the first sourcing and holistic research paper about his life and services. It includes a detailed description of the primate's imprisonment period as well as the evaluation of the period of time.

Key words: Wyszynski, Gniezno, the Polish Catholic Church, the imprisonment of the Polish Primate.

Undoubtedly, Stefan Cardinal Wyszyński, Archbishop of Gniezno and Warsaw and Primate of Poland, is one of the most outstanding figures of the post-war period in Poland. He became the head of the Church, which for the communist authorities was a deadly enemy in the fight for the Poles. His wisdom, dedication to the service of God and the Church and uncompromising attitude prevented the infiltration of ecclesiastical circles and the attempts to subordinate the church hierarchy to the “followers of the new order,” but also inhibited the communist indoctrination of the nation. How-

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ever, the events of autumn 1953 could have changed this state of affairs in favor of the Polish People's Republic authorities.

At that time, the relationship between the state and the church deteriorated. On September 23, 1953, probably inspired by Bolesław Bierut, the secretary of the Political Bureau of the Polish United Workers' Party (at its 261th session), he decided to take more effective preventive measures against Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński than heretofore used. Cardinal Wyszyński was to commit abuse of his office and violate point 70 of the then constitution, a decree of 9 February 1953, and order No. 700/53 of the Prime Minister on appointments of clergy to church positions.¹ On September 24, the Presidium of the Government of the Polish People's Republic adopted the following resolution:

As a result of persistent abuse by Fr. Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński, his functions and ecclesiastical positions for purposes affecting the interests of the Polish People's Republic, protecting and patronizing actions violating applicable laws and ordinances of state authorities and at the same time anxious and undermining the unity of society, in the face of attempts to invade the borders of the Polish People's Republic, Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński is prohibited from pursuing his professional activity resulting from the church positions he held until now. In order to prevent further damage resulting from the abovementioned activity of Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński, it is commissioned to the state authorities to ensure that he leaves the city of Warsaw immediately and resides in a designated monastery without the right to leave the monastery, pending issuance of any new order of the authorities.²

Stanisław Radkiewicz, the then Minister for Public Security, was appointed as the contractor of the order. On 25 September 1953, he issued the order No. 041 (No. – AA – 228/53), addressed to Colonel Karol Więckowski, director of the 11th Department of the Ministry of Public Security, instructed him to implement these government decisions. Late in the evening of 25 September, four officers of the Ministry of Public Security entered the Archbishop's office in Warsaw to notify Cardinal Wyszyński of the decision of the authorities and comply with its provisions. Wyszyński's protests were not taken into account. The Primate left the building assisted by the officers who transported him to a place unknown to his colleagues. Thus, the three-year period of Wyszyński's imprisonment began. The communist authorities,

¹ G. BARTOSZEWSKI, *Aresztowanie prymasa Stefana kardynała Wyszyńskiego*, "Biuletyn Zrzeszeń Katolickich Archidiecezji Warszawskiej" 24(2013), p. 6.

² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

using the confusion within the episcopate, intensified their actions, once again trying to gain control over the church structures. It was one of the most difficult periods in the life of the Polish Church during the communist era.

So far, many publications have been written describing both the intra-church situation and the state-church relation in those years, although many events still need to be elaborated. However, very little is known today about the situation in the Archdiocese of Gniezno without the diocesan bishop. At that time, it was administered by Fr. mitred prelate Stanisław Bross, as a result of certain circumstances that pertained in the diocese, but also – what is worth emphasizing at the beginning – with the consent of the then Ordinary of Łódź, Bishop Michał Klepacz, who was the chairman of the Polish Episcopate.

1. CHILDHOOD AND PREWAR PERIOD

Stanisław Bross was born on October 17, 1895 in Witkowo,³ to Konstanty Bross and Helena Bross née Knast. He grew up in a family cultivating patriotic traditions. His father was a school inspector in Trzemeszno. He was deprived of his position by the partitioning authorities for supporting the strike of the Września children in 1905.⁴ Stanisław had two sisters and four brothers. All his brothers took part in the Greater Poland Uprising. Kazimierz was a doctor of medicine and editor of medical journals in Poznań, he died during the September 1939 campaign. Stefan (doctor of veterinary medicine) died shortly after leaving the camp in Stutthof. Marian was a lawyer, he was murdered in Katyn. The youngest brother, Wiktor, was a highly regarded cardiac surgeon.⁵

³ Biographical information up to 1953 and related to death and funeral, unless otherwise stated, come from the press article published in "Słowo Powszechne" after the death of Fr. S. Bross. They were confirmed and supplemented with replies given in writing by the director of the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno, because the personal file of Fr. S. Bross, stored in the Gniezno archive, has a security classification and is not made available. Cf. *Pamięci kapłana, który wiedzę łączył z miłością*, "Słowo Powszechne," no. 167 from 15-16-17 October 1982.

⁴ Konstanty Bross died in Poznań at the beginning of World War II. He was injured during the deportation of his family by German soldiers. Cf. http://www.termedia.pl/Czasopismo/Kardiochirurgia_i_Torako chirurgia_Polska-40/Summary-6017 [access on: 28/06/2016].

⁵ Wiktor Bross was the youngest of Stanisław Bross's siblings. He was born in 1903 in Witkowo. He graduated from the Classical High School in Gniezno, and in 1922 he started studying at the Faculty of Medicine at the Poznań University of Medical Science. After 2 years, he moved to Lviv, where he continued his education at the Lviv National Medical University. In 1928 he

Stanisław graduated from high school in Trzemeszno and Gniezno, where in 1914 he passed the matriculation examination. From 1914, he studied theology in Wrocław, then in Münster and – in the final year of the program – in Gniezno. On 5 April 1919, he was ordained a priest by the Archbishop of Gniezno, Cardinal Edmund Dalbor. At the beginning of August 1919, he became a vicar in Żnin. From December 1924, he began his doctoral studies in theology and church law. He also studied art and history in Paris. After graduating in 1928 and defending his doctoral dissertation, he traveled to Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, England, Germany, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Among other things, he wanted to learn about the principles of action taken by the Catholic Action in these countries. He returned to Poland around April 1929.

In April 1928, responding to papal teaching, the Polish Episcopate also established the Catholic Action. Cardinal August Hlond, in a decree of November 1930, established the Supreme Institute of the Catholic Action in Poznań. Fr. Bross became its second director.⁶ He held the office from the beginning of October 1930 until April 1938. He also organized the structures of the Catholic Action in particular dioceses and actively promoted the movement, as evidenced by his involvement in the creation and running of the following publishing houses, of which he was the founder and / or editor-in-chief: “Ruch Katolicki” (1931-1938), “Książnica Akcji Katolickiej”, “Kultura Katolicka” (1934-1938), “W służbie Królewskiego Kapłaństwa” (1935-1936), “Biblioteczka Akcji Katolickiej”, “Biblioteczka Rekolekcyjna”, “Szkoła Czynu, Kultura” (1936-1938), or “Misterium Christi” (the only liturgical magazine in Poland at that time) (1935-1938).⁷ He was also an editor or translator of many works in the field of lay apostolate in the Church, and marriage and family. In 1933, he organized the first Catholic Study on the Family in Poznań. Three years later, he organized the

obtained a doctor's degree in all medical sciences and began his apprenticeship at the St. Elisabeth Hospital in Katowice. In 1930 he returned to Lviv, where he worked initially in a general hospital, and 3 years later he became an assistant to an outstanding surgeon, professor Tadeusz Ostrowski. After World War II he moved to Recovered Land and lived in Wrocław. He was a valued lecturer at the Wrocław Medical Academy, a surgeon, a pioneer in thoracic surgery and a co-creator of cardiac surgery in Wrocław. In 1958, he conducted the first open-heart surgery in Poland. He died in Katowice on 19 January 1994; see <http://dokument.slam.katowice.pl/monogram.asp?idm=2528>, <http://wsa.dbc.wroc.pl/biogramy/index.html?page=dane/93.html> [access on: 28 June 2016].

⁶ The first director was Bishop Stanisław Adamski.

⁷ Cf. L. WILCZYŃSKI, *Nowoczesne środki przekazu w działalności Akcji Katolickiej w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym*, www.ak.rumia.pomorskie.pl/materialy/ks%20Wilczynski.doc [access on: 16 October 2014].

Second Catholic School in Vilnius, under the heading “Catholic educational thought.” He was interested in “cinema issues” and more specifically – in the activities of amateur parish cinemas run by priests.⁸

In the 1931-1936 period he was a delegate of the Polish Episcopate for the Catholic Union of Women in Poland⁹ and the moderator of the Ladies Sodality in Poznań. He was appointed judge at the Metropolitan Court in Poznań at that time. He also organized, by order of the then Primate, the International Radio Congress (May 1937) and the International Congress of Christ the King (June 1937).

In recognition of his merits, he was appointed secret Chamberlain by Pope Pius XI in April 1934.¹⁰

2. 1939-1953

The outbreak of World War II found him in Poznań. In November 1939, he was arrested (in unknown circumstances) and transported to the Dachau concentration camp. After being released from the camp, he left Poland for a time to return in 1947. He settled in Warsaw.¹¹ He was then the judge of the tribunal of the third instance, he also worked in the secretariat of the Primate of Poland and lectured at the Major Seminary in Gniezno.

“For his attitude and tireless work of spreading Catholic culture and the cult of Polish saints”¹² in August 1949, he was appointed by the Pope as prelate – the Curator of the Metropolitan Chapter of the Gniezno Basilica.

Published notes of Cardinal Wyszyński from 1952 and 1953 make it possible to conclude that in those years, Fr. Bross had the growing support of the Primate. In his *Diary*, Cardinal Wyszyński wrote not only about traveling with Fr. Bross to Częstochowa, Gniezno and Warsaw,¹³ but also about Bross’s participation in various councils, chaired by the Primate,

⁸ For further information on the involvement of Fr. Bross in using the latest advances in technology in pastoral ministry: see *ibid.*

⁹ Deprived of his office at his own request.

¹⁰ The title of the “secret chamberlain” was replaced in 1968 by Pope Paul VI with the title of “chaplain of His Holiness.” Cf. PAWEŁ VI, *Motu proprio Pontificalis domus*, III, 7 § 6.

¹¹ This is confirmed by a note from the Journal of Cardinal S. Wyszyński of 22 January 1949; cf. S. WYSZYŃSKI, *Pro memoria. Zapiski z lat 1948-1949 i 1952-1953*, Warsaw 2007, p. 33.

¹² Archives of the Archdiocese of Gniezno, Files of the Metropolitan Curia [hereinafter: AAG AKM] III, 51.

¹³ Cf. S. WYSZYŃSKI, *Pro memoria*, pp. 129-130, 380-382.

concerning the situation in the diocese of Cracow after a revision in the cathedral and arrests,¹⁴ restitution of the chapter in Kamień Pomorski¹⁵ and current affairs of the diocese of Opole.¹⁶ Moreover, Cardinal Wyszyński entrusted Fr. Bross with responsible tasks. Wyszyński appointed Bross as an apostolic visitor in the Congregation of the Philippine Fathers and the Congregation of the Albertine Brothers,¹⁷ and noted his skeptical assessment of the beatification process of Marcelina Darowska¹⁸ at that time. The Primate also noted that he spent the last hours of 1952 accompanied by Fr. Bross.¹⁹

On 4 February 1953, Cardinal Wyszyński wrote in his *Diary* that he had held an evening conference with Bishop L. Bernacki, who at that time was the only acting vicar general of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. He had advised him to take leave for health reasons and to start treatment in Krynica, and during this time the duties of the vicar general would be performed by Fr. Bross. The bishop had very willingly agreed to this offer and decided to forward the agenda to Fr. Bross.²⁰ Information about the nomination of Fr. Bross was officially announced during the conference of dean priests, which took place in Gniezno exactly one month later.²¹

Fr. Bross, holding a very important office – regarding the frequent absence of the Primate in the Archdiocese of Gniezno – actually decided on most of the current affairs of the Archdiocese. His decisions were consulted with the Primate. We can find some of their conversations in the aforementioned notes of Cardinal Wyszyński from Gniezno²² and Warsaw,²³ where he reported to the Primate on the work done so far in the Archdiocese of Gniezno. These conversations, as can be seen from Wyszyński's note of 23 March 1953, were not casual. The Primate wrote: "I celebrated mass at 6.00 am in the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus [in Bydgoszcz – author's footnote] and gave a short speech to the people. [...] After breakfast, I went with Fr. can. Czerniak and Fr. can. Padacz to Gniezno. I spent the rest of the day in Gniezno talking to the vicar general, the mitred prelate Fr. Bross."²⁴

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 166.

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 381.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 239, 242, 249, 276.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 235.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 397.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 431.

²¹ Ibid., p. 455.

²² Ibid., pp. 440, 495, 528, 578, 587, 596.

²³ Ibid., p. 486, cf. pp. 462, 567.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 468.

An extremely important episode in the biography of Fr. Bross was also an attempt undertaken by Cardinal Wyszyński, to appoint him in November 1952, the manager of the Katowice diocese.²⁵ It happened in a situation when its ordinary, Bishop Stanisław Adamski, was removed from office by a decision of state authorities, and subsequent candidates, who were appointed by Episcopate as his successor, were rejected by them. The Primate addressed this matter to Bolesław Bierut. In his letter to Bierut, he wrote: "The situation that occurred in the Katowice diocese has not been successfully solved yet. [...] The lack of an administrator of the Diocese is highly harmful to both the Church and the State; it arouses general anxiety, both among the clergy and the Silesians attached to the Church. Because efforts to agree on a candidate for the position of the Administrator of the Diocese so far have not been successful, I am forced by my duties, and acting under the special powers of the Holy See, to appoint the Administrator of the Diocese, in the person of the mitred prelate Fr. Dr. Stanisław Bross."²⁶ This candidacy was also rejected, of which Cardinal Wyszyński was notified on the next day.²⁷ This event undoubtedly confirms, however, that the Primate vested exceptional trust in Bross.

Cardinal Wyszyński did not idealize work with Fr. Bross. He was aware of Bross's faults. In a note from the end of April 1953, he performed the first, more extensive assessment of Bross. It was critical, though – as he claimed – within the "curial norm." He noted: "Before noon, I was sitting with the mitred prelate Fr. Bross and discussing on curial matters. I asked Fr. Bross to conduct curial matters in a peaceful manner and not to remove people from their positions, but to try to cooperate. It is noteworthy how difficult it is to find co-workers who would be able to cooperate. They are rather people who desire to govern. «Let the bishop govern the diocese, as long as we govern the bishop» – it is almost a common phenomenon among the curial magnitudes. My new Vicar General is not far from this. His judgments are hasty and sometimes biased; you have to be careful not to follow the first suggestion, because you can harm someone. I trust that Fr. Bross will understand my method of «governance» which consists in the least pos-

²⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 362. In the cited publication, the names Stanisław Bross and Aleksy Brasse (then a parish priest of the Gniezno cathedral) are used interchangeably, which is an error.

²⁶ S. WYSZYŃSKI, *List z dnia 23 listopada 1953 r. do B. Bieruta w sprawie mianowania rządcy diecezji w Katowicach* – cited after: P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL. Kościół katolicki a państwo w świetle dokumentów 1945-1989*, vol. I: *Lata 1945-59*, Poznań 1994, p. 376.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 363.

sible governance, and serving people as much as possible.”²⁸ This opinion was confirmed over time.

3. THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF GNIEZNO

The imprisonment of Cardinal Wyszyński radically changed the position of Fr. Bross, the situation in the Archdiocese of Gniezno, and in the entire Polish Church. It was a manifestation of a ruthless fight of the communist authorities against the Catholic Church. For the Archdiocese of Gniezno it was a very difficult period. Bishop Lucjan Bernacki, suffragan of Gniezno and vicar general, who for health reasons resigned in February 1953, was denied the right to stay in the diocese after the imprisonment of the Primate.²⁹ Fr. Edmund Palewodziński, the Chancellor of the Curia, became a secret informant of the Security Office “on the basis of loyalty.”³⁰ In October 1954, Fr. H. Raiter, a trusted assistant of the Primate, who was responsible for catechesis in the diocese, was forced to leave Gniezno after refusing to take an oath “for fidelity to the Polish People’s Republic.”³¹

In these new circumstances, Fr. Bross was the only active vicar general of the diocese of Gniezno. He held the supreme office in the Primate’s diocese and he had the right to administer the Archdiocese.³²

The *Code of Canon Law* 1917 stipulated that in a situation where the diocesan bishop can not administer his diocese (*sede impedita*), a vicar general or another clergyman delegated by the bishop takes office, unless otherwise decided by the Holy See.³³ Cardinal Wyszyński did not leave any written in-

²⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 498-499.

²⁹ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska w czasach komunizmu 1945-1980* Warsaw 2012, p. 72.

³⁰ AIPN, 01283/602, Depart Card. C of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, no date, no pagination, cited after: B. KALISKI, *Archdiocese of Gniezno*, p. 73.

³¹ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 73.

³² After the arrest of the Primate, during his visit to one of the parishes of the Klucze deanery, Bishop Bernacki was detained by the Security Office’s officers and transported to Poznań, to their headquarters, located at Młyńska Street. There, security officials informed him that henceforth he was prohibited from staying in the archdiocese of Gniezno. Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 72.

³³ Cf. J. BORUCKI, *Rada katedralna i rada kapłańska – stary i nowy senat biskupa diecezjalnego*, “*Studia Włocławskie*” 9(2006), pp. 247-248. In the absence of the abovementioned, this Code provided for special privileges for the Cathedral Chapter, which was to choose within eight

struction for this contingency. Also, the Holy See, after the imprisonment of the Primate, did not make any decisions.

One of the first documents signed by Fr. Bross after the imprisonment of the Primate was the following message dated October 15, 1953 (which was to be read on October 18, 1953 during the Sunday liturgy in all churches): “in the face of the obstacles in the existing administration of the Archdiocese (*sede impedita*), current Vicar General Fr. Dr Stanisław Bross was granted by canon 429 of the Code of Canon Law, the Ordinary of our Archdiocese of Gniezno and took over the administration of the Archdiocese on September 26 1953, under the law of the administration of the Archdiocese given by His Excellency Bishop Dr Michał Klepacz by the special powers granted to him by the Holy See of all rights and privileges of the residential Bishop.”³⁴

The letter was issued on the day on which the President of the Polish Episcopate³⁵ signed a decree confirming taking over the administration (sic!) over the archdiocese of the Primate, by Fr. Bross.³⁶ On November 25, 1953, the secretary of Bishop Klepacz sent an attached indult, prepared with the addition of the above-mentioned decree model of a rescript, announcing that Fr. Bross was given the power of the Bishop.³⁷ In this way, his authority as an “ordinary” was legitimized.

Bross held a PhD in canon law, in the light of which he regarded himself as the rightful administrator of the Archdiocese, and not only the one who administered it until the Bishop’s return. Such an interpretation of canon law, in a short time, caused the clergy’s resistance to him, increased by his personal characteristics and the way of conducting current affairs of the archdiocese.

The “ingress” of Fr. Bross to the Primate’s Basilica caused great indignation. It took place at his request on the feast of Christ the King, October 25, 1953.³⁸ For the first time, he was openly opposed by some of the cathe-

days after receiving information about the vacancy, Vicar Capitular, who, after his confession, received the authority by operation of law.

³⁴ *Dodatek do zarządzenia XI/53 r.*, “Wiadomości Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej” of 15 October 1953.

³⁵ On September 28, 1953, three days after the arrest of Primate Stefan Wyszyński, Bross took over the chairing of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate at the request of the communist authorities.

³⁶ The document is included in the personal file of Fr. Stanisław Bross in the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ AAG, AKM I, 1079, *Relatio de novissimo triennio IX-1953-X-1956 regiminis archidio- ceseos Gnesnensis Sede impedita gesti modo – proch dolor – iniqua et doloso contra mentem Archipraesulis, custodia arta detenti*, 12 December 1956 r., no pagination.

dral canons and the authorities of the seminary. The main ceremony chairman refused to serve, and the director of the choir refused to sing the song *Ecce sacerdos magnus*, performed only before the diocesan bishop. The cathedral chapter also did not appear at the ceremony, although some of its members came *incognito* to the temple to observe the course of events from a distance. Also the Rector and the spiritual father of the seminary and some clerics refused to participate in the Mass. Shortly afterwards, all the functional, mentioned above, faced harassment from Fr. Bross as they were deprived of their offices.³⁹

As reported by the Rector of the Seminary after the release of the Primate, the new “Ordinary” of the Archdiocese “presented himself as the new Archdiocese Administrator – as an ordinary (*quasi unice existens et competens*); so he appointed himself, trampling (and in fact betraying) the trust placed in him by his superior, the ordinary of the Archdiocese, who as sole legal Ordinary was in chains.”⁴⁰ The insignia of power, which he granted himself, were the quasi-archbishop’s skullcap and biretta, and mozzetta. During the procession on St. Adalbert’s Day, he also used bishop’s staff.⁴¹

He demonstrated his power to clerics. In a short time, major changes in the seminary occurred. On December 21, 1953, he granted the rector Fr. Pacyna a two-month extended leave. At the end of March 1954, Fr. Szymański was dismissed, after numerous “incentives” to subordinate to the new “administrator” of the Archdiocese.⁴²

After arresting the Primate, Fr. Bross visited the seminary first. That’s how the then cleric Fr. Zygmunt Zieliński described his visit: “in the Gniezno seminary, for the first time, the Poznań seminarians of all theological courses, from I to VI, came together.”⁴³ Older colleagues have said that the administration of the diocese would be taken over by the vicar general, Fr. Bross. The news was confirmed almost immediately. During one of the lectures on the history of the Church, he explained to us after a long time that he possessed *potentatem ordinariam et plenariam*, as he was the Vicar General *sede impedita*. He took the skullcap and the bishop’s cross from his briefcase and showed them to us as the insignia he was entitled to. Inci-

³⁹ *Relatio de novissimo triennio...*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Cf. ibid.*

⁴² *Cf. ibid.*

⁴³ Until now, the lower grades (philosophy) of the Gniezno and Poznań seminars were held together in Gniezno, while the higher ones (theology) in Poznań.

dentally, because I was late for this lecture, I had the opportunity to observe from the hiding, how Fr. Bross twice put on and off the pectoral cross and the skullcap when standing in front of the door.”⁴⁴

This historian of the Church and the witness of these events also describes Bross’s “ingress” to the cathedral in Gniezno, from the perspective of the cleric of the Gniezno Major Seminary. In Zieliński’s opinion, because the rector of the seminary, Fr. Józef Pacyna and the spiritual father, Fr. Stanisław Szymański refused to participate in the ceremony, they were dismissed. “The spiritual father left right after he had preached his famous sermon, which Fr. Bross listened to from the choir of the seminary chapel. Faced with a conflict arising because of the attitude of a group of seminarians applauding the peculiar personnel policy of Fr. Bross, especially in the seminary, Fr. Szymański recalled the duty of faithfulness to the Prisoner, also through respect for his decisions. We knew that the day after the spiritual father had been called to the curia, he ended his career as a moderator. Both of them returned in 1956.”⁴⁵ Pacyna settled in Miasteczko Krajeńskie, and Fr. Bross appointed himself a rector.⁴⁶ In fact, the rector’s duties were fulfilled by the previous vice-rector Fr. Felicjan Kłoniecki.⁴⁷ The current administrator of Karmin, Fr. Feliks Staszak became the new spiritual father. At the end of July 1954, Szymański left Gniezno and returned to Poznań.

After the release of Cardinal Wyszyński, Fr. Kłoniecki delivered him a report, which presented a darker picture of the administration of Fr. Bross over clerics and diocesan priests. It turns out that in the discussed period some clerics, without the knowledge and consent of the superiors, “informed” him about the situation that prevailed within the seminary, although most clerics remained neutral. However, as noted in Kłoniecki’s report, “it is difficult to be neutral to the terror used both in the seminary and in the diocese. A priest at the parish will take up the deposit of money, surrender to everything, even contrary to his beliefs, so that he can free himself from the sword of Damocles, who is Bross. It is not easy, because Bross travels around the diocese every day and constantly pays visits, turning one cleric

⁴⁴ Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Alumn w trybach historii*, [in:] *Księga Jubileuszowa Prymasowskiego Wyższego Seminarium Duchownego w Gnieźnie 1602-2002*, ed. P. Podeszwa, W. Polak, Gniezno 2002, pp. 341-342.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Information obtained from the answers given by the director of the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno.

⁴⁷ Biography of Bishop Bogdan Wojtuś available at: www.archidiecezja.pl [access on: 28 June 2016].

against the other, especially those who want to retain sovereignty without bowing down before him, or being on a basis of «His Excellence» or «Ordinary».”⁴⁸ In the further passage of this document, his author expressed his joy at the attitude of most clerics and priests who still expected the primate’s return, considering him the only legitimate administrator of the diocese.⁴⁹ He also noted that Bross’s behavior had a negative effect on clerics. Among other things, he mentioned: mocking lecturers, changing decisions of superiors concerning orders or exams, hosting seminarians in his home or staying in their rooms until late evening, taking his favorite seminarians for trips and visits into the diocese, and, finally, violent dismissal of Fr. Szymanski.⁵⁰ He summed up the administration of Fr. Bross in one sentence: “Br. creates his own history of the diocese.”⁵¹

Fr. Bross was certainly aware of the reluctance of some clerics towards him. It seems, however, that he could not restrain his ambitions and treated any opposition to his decisions as an act of disobedience to the ordinary of the place he considered himself. This, in turn, strengthened the resistance of the Gniezno clergy to himself and his decisions. An extraordinary testimony of the division within the presbytery of the Archdiocese of Gniezno, caused by Bross’s activity and attitude, can also be found in the documents of the secret police. In their opinion, “Bross attempts to show his loyalty officially in conversations with representatives of the secular authorities, but in fact he is negative and mercilessly persecutes all priests who even partly participate in the movement of progressive Catholics.”⁵²

As stated in the monthly report on the work of the 11th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Bydgoszcz from 1953, “the assignment of the function of the Ordinary of the diocese of Gniezno to Fr. BROSS evoked dissatisfaction among most members of the Chapter and curialists. Fr. BROSS declared to Fr. HANELT during his visit to Bydgoszcz that in his work, he faced difficulties caused by these priests. The acrimonious remarks are made that, for example, he is a Bishop of BIERUT, etc.”⁵³

⁴⁸ AAG, AKM I, 1079, Report of the rector of ASD, Fr. F. Kłoniecki for the period from 15 September 1953 to 30 June 1956, no pagination.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵⁰ Cf. *ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² IPN Po 06/110, vol. 9, Report on the work of the 6th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from 1 April to 30 September 1956, from 13 October 1956, card 155.

⁵³ IPN By 036/59, Report on the work of the 9th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Bydgoszcz for November 1953, from 7 December 1953, card 48.

According to one of the informers, Fr. Bross was treated with distrust and even hostility by priests working in parishes. This was apparent during his visit in Bydgoszcz, where Bross was not welcomed by parish priests of the major parishes and Fr. Skonieczny, dean of the deanery, called followers of Wyszynski.” At that time, there was a division into the supporters of the Primate and the Brossians.

In order to better understand the growing resistance among the clergy of the Archdiocese of Gniezno to a new “administrator” it is worth confronting the passage cited above with a section of the report of the 4th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from April to September 1956. As stated in the report, since Fr. Bross took office in the archdiocese of Gniezno, the situation in the curia changed dramatically. The new administrator was supposed to treat the priests subordinate to him “in a dictatorial manner,” which caused their resentment and anger. This resulted in the dissemination of rumors and information aimed at undermining his personal authority, which in any case was low. This, in turn, deepened the atmosphere of distrust of himself and his decisions. One of the officers of the Security Service wrote: “The priests use (even during their talks with us) such words as «scoundrel», «there is probably no worse man than Bross» etc. The priests say that even though the state struggles with the concentration of capital in public ownership, it facilitates everything to Bross. Bross disrespects priests. One day, a serious curia worker came to Bross’s office and presented current affairs to him for over half an hour – he was standing, because Bross did not ask him to sit down. Therefore, the agency stated that they would not agree to approach him, because this would offend the informant as a man.”⁵⁴ Again, this report confirms the deep divisions in the assessment of administering the diocese by Bross while it was underway.

Bross’s personnel policy towards the clergy was also of great importance. He appointed or (as interpreted by B. Kaliski, the author of a monograph entitled *Archdiocese of Gniezno in the Communist Era of 1945-1980*), gave in (under the pressure of the communist authorities), from the appointment of several parish priests from among the priests-patriots.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ IPN Po 06/110, vol. 9, Report on the work of the 6th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from. 1 April to 30 September 1956, from 13 October 1956, card 155.

⁵⁵ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 80.

Kaliski proves, however, that Fr. Bross also tried to protect priests from attacks by the Security Service. One example is the case of Fr. Rynkiewicz.⁵⁶ His arrangement with the communist authorities was not well perceived among the clergy and could have provided an additional argument against obedience to his decisions. Due to the authorities' refusal to appoint vicars and other priests,⁵⁷ Fr. Bross only gave them verbal jurisdiction, which also caused tensions among the clergy.

In later years, the Security Service fueled the divisions among priests created during the imprisonment of the Primate. A good example may be a letter "prepared and promoted" by the 1st division of the 4th Department of the Interior Ministry in Bydgoszcz in the summer of 1969. It was to express dissatisfaction of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Gniezno with the administration of the Primate of the Millennium and was addressed to "His Eminence Fr. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński ... to be considered..."⁵⁸ It stated that "if His Excellency was actually guided by the paternal attitude towards us priests, then there would be no facts of discrimination against the so-called Brossians. It is necessary for God to forgive them «for their agreeable activities with the government» – in due time we forgave in the message even the Germans who had murdered many Poles, including priests."⁵⁹

4. THE RETURN OF THE PRIMATE

On the wave of the political thaw of 1956, on 26 October, Cardinal Wyszyński was released, who immediately asked for his assistants: Bishop Antoni Baraniak and Bishop Lucjan Bernacki.⁶⁰ Both of them returned to their previous tasks. The legitimate administrator returned to the archdiocese of Gniezno. Thereby, the period of the administration of the archdiocese by Fr. Bross ended.

The Primate arrived in Gniezno on 14 November 1956. He was greeted by a large crowd of the faithful and the clergy, but Fr. Bross was no longer there. Cardinal Wyszyński thanked Bishop Bernacki and the Primate's

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 76-79.

⁵⁷ In 1956, this situation concerned more than 40 priests from the Archdiocese of Gniezno. See *ibid.*, p. 80.

⁵⁸ IPN By 069/1294, A letter prepared and promoted by the 1st Division of the 4th Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Bydgoszcz D-003481/69, from 29 July 1969, pp. 260-264.

⁵⁹ Ibid., card 262.

⁶⁰ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 72.

Chapter for their attitude of loyalty, he mentioned a very harrowing time Bishop A. Baraniak had spent in prison and spoke about his own imprisonment. Fr. Bross was not mentioned in Wyszyński's speech. In the evening, the Primate celebrated Holy Mass in the Primate's Basilica. The Mass was transmitted through the loudspeakers to the cathedral square.⁶¹

Cardinal Wyszyński began to analyze the administration of his vicar general. In a short time, he withdrew the appointments of the priests-patriots to parish priests, considering them legally void.⁶² He also restored Fr. Szymański to the post of the spiritual father of the seminary.⁶³ He began visiting the parishes of the diocese.⁶⁴

On November 16, 1956, Fr. Bross was dismissed from the position of a Vicar General.⁶⁵ The Primate ordered him to take a three-month health treatment outside of Gniezno.⁶⁶ Bishop L. Bernacki took over his duties.

Fr. Bross retired at the beginning of April 1959. He received the decision to be granted a monthly pension from the church fund.⁶⁷ In 1959, he received a canonical admonition (reprimand) for exceeding his competences and, in general, for the administration of the diocese during the imprisonment of the Primate.⁶⁸

In 1962, he was asked to leave the Chapter of the Primate's Basilica. Despite the repeated requests of its members, and also personally Cardinal Wyszyński, in the face of his refusal, he was removed from it by the decree of the Primate of 15 May 1962. In 1962, he began moving to Wrocław, where his brother Wiktor lived. Then, his health problems began and he was hospitalized.

In the personal file of Bross there is a note dated on 17 May 1966 from the conversation he had with Bishop J. Michalski, suffragan of Gniezno, at the request of Cardinal Wyszyński. It shows that Fr. Bross complained about the need to leave the canon in Gniezno and pointed to the embarrassing need for him to move to his brother, after the death of whom he would lose his

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 97.

⁶² Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 97.

⁶³ Fr. Pacyna was reinstated in April 1956. Cf. AAG, AKM I, 1079.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 97.

⁶⁶ Information obtained from the answers given by the director of the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

only place of residence. However, he rejected Bishop's offer to move to the diocesan Priest Retirement Residence in Wągrowiec.⁶⁹

From then on, Fr. Bross completely moved away from the affairs and life of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. Because of the events described above, as well as his age and illness, he visited Gniezno less frequently. He died in Wrocław on 28 January 1982, at the age of 87. In his letter describing the last moments of Bross's life, Fr. Hieronim⁷⁰ mentions the great physical suffering Bross experienced over the last 7 years of his life due to inertia, the received sacraments and circumstances of his death. The letter concludes with the following sentence: "Thus this Man passed away, who with his last suffering compensated all the guilts of his life."⁷¹ The funeral mass was celebrated in the hospital chapel in Wrocław. It was presided over and delivered a homily by the metropolitan of Wrocław, Cardinal Henryk Gulbinowicz. The author of the posthumous article on the figure of Fr. Bross which was published in the newspaper "Słowo Powszechne" wrote that the preacher had sketched "in a solemn posthumous memoir, the figure of a wise, brave and loving priest."⁷²

The funeral took place in Bross's family town Witkowo, in the archdiocese of Gniezno, on 1 February 1982. The ceremony was presided over by Bishop Jan Czerniak, suffragan of Gniezno. The homily was delivered by Fr. Seweryn Tomczak, a parish priest in Białośliwie, a fellow prisoner of Dachau, who – as he testified – "owed his life to the deceased, who had saved him from the gas chamber."⁷³ In his homily, Tomczak emphasized the beautiful, humanitarian attitude of Bross during his imprisonment in the death camp, and giving his own food portions to his sick fellow prisoners in order to save them from death.⁷⁴

Bross's body was buried in the family tomb at the local cemetery. The day after the funeral, Bishop Tadeusz Rybak, suffragan of Wrocław, celebrated a requiem mass at the local cathedral.

⁶⁹ Information obtained from the answers given by the director of the Archdiocesan Archives in Gniezno.

⁷⁰ Details are unknown.

⁷¹ Letter from Hieronim, in: AAG, AKM III, 51.

⁷² *Pamięci kapłana, który wiedzę łączył...*

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Cf. *ibid.*

5. AN ATTEMPTED EVALUATION OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE ARCHDIOCESE BY STANISŁAW BROSS

As already mentioned in the introduction, Fr. Bross is a figure not known even to most historians. His administration of the archdiocese of Gniezno remains unknown and unexplored. That is why it is difficult to get its full and balanced evaluation today. The closure of church archives, the personal file of Fr. Bross, stored in the Archdiocese Archives in Gniezno, and the materials collected in the beatification process of Cardinal Wyszyński, delay such a comprehensive evaluation. However, it is still possible to evaluate the actions undertaken by Fr. Bross.

Today only the files of the Security Service of the Polish People's Republic and the memories of priests are available. In the archives of the Institute of National Remembrance, there is no personal file of Fr. Bross. There are only some notes documenting the lack of the files from January, October and December 1989.⁷⁵ A handwritten note mentions: "priest – hostile attitude to the Polish People's Republic."⁷⁶ The more harsh wording – "an extremely negative attitude"⁷⁷ – was recorded in the report of the work of the 4th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from October 1 to December 31, 1955. It can therefore be assumed that Fr. Bross did not consciously cooperate with the communist authorities, although those – having a good diagnosis – had an active operational policy regarding him.

The lack of conscious cooperation between Fr. Bross and the communist authorities also makes the documents stored in the personal file of Bishop

⁷⁵ Cf. IPN Po 00169/51, Disposal Report no. 45 from 2 January 1982 of the operational files (files of operational records regarding priests until 1975, operational issues regarding priests of various religions until 1975 and lay persons employed in institutions and religious organizations until 1975). II reference from 1956-1980. Department C p.5, item 178; IPN Po 00169/70, Disposal Report no. 64 from 12 October 1989, act of division IV, II reference number {TEOK} and reference number the 4th Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Poznań, p. 6, item 285; IPN Po 00169/72, Report on the missing act No. 66 of 19 December 1989, microfilms of the reference number II, Department C of the Voivode Office of Internal Affairs in Poznań, p. 8, item 173; IPN Po 06/303, vol. 126, Journal of materials transferred to the archives (Department C) of the Voivode Office of Internal Affairs in Poznań, p. 91, item 11832.

⁷⁶ IPN Po 00188/2, Official Archives of Operational Records Affairs, reference number II b. of the Voivode Office of Internal Affairs in Poznań, no. from 3000 to 5471, p. 39, item 3932.

⁷⁷ Cf. IPN Po 06/110, vol. 9, Report on the work of 6th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from 1 October to 31 December 1955, from 31 December 1955, card 59.

L. Bernacki very probable.⁷⁸ In the operational plan against Bross, dated February 1957, there is a resolution to undertake efforts to recruit him (these activities were to end by April 1958), which is an indirect proof of the lack of such cooperation until then.⁷⁹ There are also numerous traces of mutual dislike of both priests, caused, as is clear from the act of the secret police, by the actions of Fr. Bross. Bishop Bernacki was presented as the one who “sits in Zaniemyśl and conducts hostile activities towards Fr. Bross, inspires.”⁸⁰ In March 1954, one of the secret collaborators reported that “Bishop Bernacki expressed his concern over the activities of Fr. Bross, among others he said that Bross should reflect on what he was doing because he did not know how it [the actions of Fr. Bross, for which many priests were skeptical or hostile – the author’s note] could end up.”⁸¹

In the opinion of security officers, after 1957, Fr. Bross was afraid of the “revenge” of Bishop L. Bernacki, who was supposed to be responsible for his isolation at the time.⁸² This fact was intended to be used to obtain valuable information from Bross in operational work against Bernacki. “The operational plan regarding the agency-related ventures for the crypt. Roman” [Bishop L. Bernacki] from the beginning of 1957, among others, states: “due to the fact that during the isolation of Bishop Bernacki, this function [the administrator of the Archdiocese – the author’s note] was held by Fr. Bross, who was therefore hated by Bishop Bernacki, who thought that Fr. Bross had caused him to be in isolation for three years. Ks. Bross is on leave, being in the countryside with his brothers. Therefore we plan to use this opportunity to interview Fr. Bross, in which, without a doubt, Fr. Bross will give us a lot of information about Bishop Bernacki and a group of priests gathered around him. This conversation will also allow us to find out if there are any operational possibilities of using Fr. Bross.”⁸³

⁷⁸ Cf. IPN Po 0186/1871, the case of operational observation under the codename “Roman” regarding Lucjan Bernacki, father’s name: Edmund, born on December 8, 1902. This was the case of the 1955-1963 operational control of the General Vicar of the Gniezno Curia, who criticized the authorities in his sermons.

⁷⁹ Cf. IPN Po 0186/1871, vol. 1, Plan of operational undertakings in the agentural case regarding Stanisław Bross, no. 45, from 24 February 1958, card 22.

⁸⁰ IPN Po 0186/1871, vol. 2, [note] regarding Fr. Kinecki from Pleszew and Bishop Bernacki, from 29 December 1953, card 765.

⁸¹ IPN Po 0186/1871, vol. 2, Letter from the deputy head of the 9th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań to the Head of the 1st Division of the 9th Department of the Ministry of Public Security in Warsaw, from 30 March 1954, card 784.

⁸² Cf. *ibid.*, The operational plan in the agentural case regarding the person code-named. “Roman,” no. 45, 27 February 1957, p. 18.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Fr. Zieliński, the cleric of the Gniezno seminary in the 1950s, also claims that the security police “used” Fr. Bross to deepen divisions within the church hierarchy and the people around Cardinal Wyszyński. In one of the articles on the figure of Bishop Antoni Baraniak,⁸⁴ Zieliński concluded that the services subjected to Antoni Bida⁸⁵ developed the clerics occupying high church positions, so as to authenticate their own allegations and “accuse the Church in Poland of actively fighting the communist regime.”⁸⁶ The attempts to break down Bishop Baraniak and the trial of Bishop Kaczmarek were aimed at this.⁸⁷ Zieliński says that “the security police counted on infiltration of Stanisław Bross, vicar general *sede impedita* in Gniezno, but these calculations completely failed.”⁸⁸ The services wanted to take advantage of the fact that – as B. Fijałkowska noted, referring to the notes of A. Bida – “Bross should be looked after. He hates Baraniak and the Primate. You can bet on him.”⁸⁹ In a way, this would make the communist authorities’ “mildness” toward him understandable.

Aside from Bross’s character traits, it should be noted that he was a very well-educated priest, holding a PhD in canon law. Therefore, his interpretation of the legal situation after the arrest of the Primate, according to which he appointed himself as the legitimate administrator of the Archdiocese of Gniezno and not only called himself “the ordinary” but also in 1956, publicly spoke about Cardinal Wyszyński as “his predecessor,”⁹⁰ is not a layman’s mistake in the interpretation of the law, but an expert’s opinion. Bross is disadvantaged by this fact. In the light of the then canon law, he was merely an administrator of the diocese. Therefore, he had no right to determine himself as an ordinary and to assign himself prerogatives reserved to the ordinary of the place.⁹¹ His powers were also limited due to this.

If we believe the documents of the Security Service, the inculpatory evidence against Fr. Bross, are denunciations of agent “Piotr”, especially the

⁸⁴ Antoni Baraniak was arrested in parallel with Cardinal Wyszyński. From 1951, he was the auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Gniezno. He also worked at the secretariat of the Primate of Poland. He was brutally investigated. He was released from prison at the end of October 1956. In mid-1957, he was appointed Metropolitan Archbishop of Poznań.

⁸⁵ At the time, Antoni Bida headed the Office for Religious Affairs.

⁸⁶ Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Polityczne i kościelne ramy życia i działalności arcybiskupa Antoniego Baraniaka*, [in:] *Ecclesia. Studia z dziejów Wielkopolski*, ed. F. Renold, vol. II, Poznań 2006, p. 344.

⁸⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 344-345.

⁸⁸ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 345.

⁸⁹ B. FIJAŁKOWSKA, *Patria wobec religii i Kościoła w PRL*, vol. I, Olsztyn 1999, p. 120.

⁹⁰ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 74.

⁹¹ Cf. *The Code of Canon Law of 1917*, canon 429, § 1.

document dated 18 January 1956. The aforementioned report of the 4th Department reveals that the agent reported the conversations of Fr. Bross regarding the visits of Maksencja, Sister Superior in the Primate's house in Warsaw, to the imprisoned Primate. Fr. Bross did not want to pay such visits to cardinal Wyszyński. In one of the denunciations, "Piotr" informs: "Bross keeps his distance from the former Primate. "Piotr" says that Bross will not go to Wyszyński, because he found a paragraph in canon law according to which visiting Wyszyński, who according to the law is still the ordinary of the diocese, would make him face the fact that he can not perform the duties of the administrator of the diocese. That is what Bross said."⁹² If this information is true, it means that Bross correctly discerned his canonical situation and consciously manipulated the law. Then, the assessment of his conduct and administration would have to be unambiguously critical and deplorable.

Moreover, Cardinal Wyszyński's attitude towards Bross must be viewed in a completely different light. During the ruthless struggle against the Catholic Church and the attempt to destabilize the situation inside the episcopate, which occurred then, Bross's decisions described above, and events he had participated had to cause a harsh and immediate reaction of Cardinal Wyszyński after his release, namely his prompt removal from holding ecclesiastical offices and holding him to account.⁹³

The range of the actions carried out by the Primate can be questioned. However, it is too early for final conclusions about the excessive repressiveness of Cardinal Wyszyński towards Fr. Bross because – as has been mentioned here several times – not all documents and circumstances of those events are known. In the light of the information gathered, it can be assumed that the actions taken by the Primate in the 1960s were appropriate for Bross's misconduct. Bross was deprived of power and privileges, retired, and at the same time secured by material means (he received a retirement pension and an offer to live in archdiocese until death). Today, he remains almost completely forgotten, but not condemned to *damnatio memoriae* (damnation of memory), as suggested by B. Kaliski in his study on the history of the Archdiocese of Gniezno in the Polish People's Republic.⁹⁴

⁹² IPN Po 06/110, vol. 9, Report on the work of the 6th Department of the Voivode Office of Public Security in Poznań for the period from. 01 January to 30 March 1956, from 4 April 1956, card 107.

⁹³ I deliberately leave aside the financial aspect of the management of Fr. Bross. Many priests of the Archdiocese of Gniezno mention his failures in this field, however, until now there is no clear evidence thereof.

⁹⁴ Cf. B. KALISKI, *Archidiecezja Gnieźnieńska*, p. 74. This wording means removing Stanisław Bross's name from documents and monuments, and destroying his image, that is, con-

The release of Cardinal Wyszyński, caused by the political and social situation, was only an instrumental tactical concession made by the authorities. It allowed the authorities to obtain a guarantee of unloading the tension and stabilizing the public mood, and thereby prevent the Soviet intervention and maintain the control over the country.⁹⁵ In his study, B. Noszczak notes: “The historical merit of Primate Wyszyński was that, being conscious of the gravity of the situation, he chose the lesser of two evils and handled the issues at a political level. Driven by higher reasons, including concern for the defense of the substance of the nation, he supported Gomułka in his own way, trying to obtain as much as possible to strengthen the Church’s position in the country and prevent any bloodshed.”⁹⁶ However, the thaw in relations between the state and the Church was also beneficial for the Church, quite heavily battered by the attacks of recent years. This was the time of respite, which was necessary to stabilize its internal affairs.

This text, probably the first one to depict the figure and activities of Fr. Stanisław Bross, may also become a contribution to further studies and analyzes of the history of the Church-state relations of that time. It provides important information both on the life of the Archdiocese of Gniezno and the biography of the Primate. It also analyses the relations within the hierarchical Church in Poland in the early 1950s. It reveals the mechanisms of power at the level of the episcopate at a crucial time of Cardinal Wyszyński’s imprisonment. It is an example of not only surveillance and operational games conducted by the Security Service with respect to the clergy, but also the process of self-defense and self-purification of the Church from those who, even acting unconsciously, were tools of the communist authorities in the fight against the Church. In the background of the described events, there is a figure of Bishop Lucjan Bernacki, a suffragan from Gniezno, also forgotten today, who is an unusual example of a person defending patriotic and religious values at that time. His attitude is best evidenced by vast historical materials gathered by the Security Service. Therefore, this biographical section presented in the context of the events of that time requires further analysis.

demning him (!) to oblivion. Cf. A. RADZIMIŃSKI, *Zapomniana historia*, “Głos Uczelni” 10(320), pp. 5-6.

⁹⁵ Cf. B. NOSZCZAK, *Polityka państwa wobec Kościoła rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w okresie internowania prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego 1953-1956*, Warsaw 2008, p. 380.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

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