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RELIGIOUS POLICY IN POLAND  
TOWARDS CATECHETICAL TEACHING  
IN THE YEARS 1961-2001

INTRODUCTION

The teaching of religion at school is included within so-called *res mixtae*, which – out of their nature – lie within the competences of both state and church authorities.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, during the period of the Polish People's Republic (PRL), completely different goals to achieve in relation to catechetical teaching were set by the Church and the state. Hence, it was hard to expect a compromise or a favourable disposition of state authorities as far as teaching religion at school was concerned. In the period of PRL, the law, administrative acts and regulations were all measures to strengthen the communist rule and subordinate all spheres of social and national life to it. The legal system did not guarantee any respect of the human person; it limited the Church laws existing for centuries, including the right to teach religion.<sup>2</sup> The situation underwent a decisive change only after 1989, as a result of the political transformation, when communist totalitarianism changed into democracy. As a consequence of those changes, rights were restored both to the Church and religious associations as well as to individual people. That is why, while analyzing the assumptions of the religious policy of the state in the years 1965-2001, two periods will be distinguished: the first one will refer to the years 1965-1989, and the other will cover the years 1989-2001.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. MEZGLEWSKI, *Skierowanie do nauczania religii*, "Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego" 2000, No. 1, p. 37.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. R. KAMIŃSKI, *Podstawowe uwarunkowania życia i działalności Kościoła w Polsce*, [in:] *Kościół w czasach Jana Pawła II*, ed. M. RUSECKI, K. KAUCHA, J. MASTEJ, Lublin 2005, p. 242.

## 1. BASIS OF THE RELIGIOUS POLICY OF THE STATE IN THE YEARS 1961-1989

The 1960's were a period of hard tests and challenges for the Church in Poland. As a consequence of the act from 15 July, 1961 on the system of education development, religious instruction was finally removed from schools. Catechetical teaching was to take place in catechetical centres. Inspectorates of Education forbade priests, nuns, parish rectors and lay teachers to teach religion in chapels, parish rooms and private apartments and reports were required from parish rectors. Besides the punishments used towards those who taught religion, the authorities used all kinds of repressions and threats towards parents of the children attending classes of religion. It was considered unacceptable to take any fees or offerings from children's parents or legal guardians for the goals connected with organizing and running catechetical centres.<sup>3</sup> Those activities of the state authorities which placed heavy burden on the Church also included high taxes, conscription of the clergy, the problem of social insurances for the clergy and the proceedings of censorship towards the publication of Paul VI's encyclical and the documents of the Second Vatican Council. Besides, the Ministry of the Interior created special units whose task was documenting the activity of the Catholic clergy and keeping records.<sup>4</sup>

Meanwhile, the authorities did not forget about the Great Novena. Carrying out their program of secularization of the Polish society, the authorities met particular resistance. The main confrontation between the State and the Church in connection with the preparations for the millennium year took place in the mid-1960's, following the letter of the Polish bishops addressed to the German bishops. The origin of that address should be sought in the Second Vatican Council lasting between 1962 and December 1965.<sup>5</sup> The relations between Poland and Germany, which were burdened with the history of World War II, caused that the content of the above-mentioned Address acquired exceptional importance. In that fairly extensive memorial, the bishops presented the Polish point of view on the harms done to the Polish nations by the Germans, but they also brought back the glorious cards from the history of Polish-German relations. The Letter was closed

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<sup>3</sup> The Ministry of Education's ordinance of 19 August 1961 on catechetical practice, "Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Oświaty" [Official Journal of Ministry of Education] 1961, No. 10, item 124; A. MEZGLEWSKI, *Nauczanie religii w Polsce Ludowej*, "Studia z Prawa Wyznaniowego" 2000, No. 1, p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL. Kościół katolicki a państwo w świetle dokumentów*, Vol. I, Poznań 1994, pp. 215, 305.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. ŻARYN, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944-1989)*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 227, 234.

with the historic appeal: "In this most Christian but also very human spirit, we are extending our hands to you, sitting here on the benches of the closing Council. We forgive and ask forgiveness".<sup>6</sup>

The official answer to the Pastoral Letter from the Episcopacy of Germany was already submitted on 5 December 1965. However, it contained no clear declarations about the border on the Odra and Nysa rivers. As a result, the communists accused the Polish bishops of forgetting about the harms done on their own nation, undermining the stability of the western borders of the Polish state and, above all, inefficiently expressing their opinions in the matters which did not lay within their competences.<sup>7</sup> However, the state authorities did not intend only to isolate the Church from the nation; above all, they wished to divert the attention of the society from the political and economic bankruptcy in which the country found itself.

With the aim of opposing the church celebrations of the Millenium of the Baptism of Poland, the party leaders decided to hold lay celebrations of 1000 years of Polish statehood. The main religious celebrations started on 14 April, 1966 in Gniezno. During those celebrations, the chair prepared for the Pope remained empty since the Chairman of the Council of State had refused to give consent for his visit in Poland already in March, 1966. The state campaign against the Church celebrations of the Millenium of the Baptism of Poland was finally crowned with so-called „arresting the Picture of Our Lady of Częstochowa” during its peregrination around Poland.<sup>8</sup>

The anti-Church policy of the authorities reached its peak of aggression in 1967, when a bill of indictment was directed to law courts against priests accusing them of anti-state activity. Persecutions and vexations towards the clergy and the laity were intensified. Moreover, religious celebrations were limited all the time. Attacks against the so-called reactionist part of the Church hierarchy also multiplied.<sup>9</sup>

Despite all those persecutions, in 1967 the Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate stood firmly against registering the catechetical centres, giving reports from catechization to the inspectors of education, controlling catechetical centres by the latter and inspecting the lessons. Besides, a strong protest was expressed in connection with the necessity of obtaining permissions from inspectors of educa-

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<sup>6</sup> *Orędzie biskupów polskich do ich niemieckich braci w Chrystusowym urzędzie pasterskim z dnia 18 listopada 1965 r.* [The Pastoral Letter of the Polish Bishops to their German Brothers from 18 November, 1965], in: P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 362.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. ŻARYN, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, pp. 238-240.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. W. ROSZKOWSKI, *Historia Polski 1914-1991*, Warszawa 1992, p. 279; H. MISZTAŁ, *Okres 1945-1989*, [in:] *Prawo wyznaniowe*, ed. H. MISZTAŁ, P. STANISZ, Lublin 2003, p. 158.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 409.

tion to conduct catechization. The Episcopate only gave consent to notify local authorities about teaching religion in private homes.<sup>10</sup> That protest of the Episcopate was answered by the Director of the Office for the Matters of Religion, accusing the Church hierarchy of the activity contradicting the legal order of PRL and attempts to introduce new tensions and conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

The state authorities went to great lengths to stir discord amid the clergy. To this aim, the so-called “passport policy” was applied, which consisted in allowing passports to some bishops and refusing them to others, all in official trips.

In successive years (1968-1970), the struggle of the state with the Church was not any more so intensive as in the period of 1958-1967. However, the authorities still led a “religious war”, refusing to grant permission for sacral buildings or conscripting the alumni (till the third year of studies). Against the background of those activities, a permanent struggle waged by the authorities for “the souls of the young generation” was going on under the banner of secularization of public life. The main tools in that fight included not only the press but also school and various types of atheist newspapers and organizations supported by official authorities, for example, the Society for the Spread of Secular Culture (TKKŚ).<sup>12</sup>

The period of 1968-1970 is characterized by three important events on which the Episcopate had to adopt a position and to which it had to react: student protests in Poland in March 1968 following the planned secularization of the youth and an “anti-Zionist” campaign, the occupation of Czechoslovakia by the armies of the Warsaw Pact and the tragedy of December 1970 connected with the celebrations of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “the miracle on the Vistula”.<sup>13</sup> The reaction of the Episcopate in the above issues was astonishing to the authorities then, which is shown for example in a report of the head of the Department for the Matters of Religion in Kielce on the opinion heard to be said by Cardinal Wojtyła: “the Church hierarchy should at this time avoid any activity of political character lest they should give any arguments to their opponents that Church intrudes into politics.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Uchwały Konferencji Plenarnej Episkopatu Polski w sprawie bezprawnego nacisku władz wyznaniowo-oświatowych z dnia 16 czerwca 1967 r.* [Acts of the Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate on illegal pressure of education authorities from 16 June, 1967], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 434; A. MEZGLEWSKI, *Nauczanie religii*, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. *Pismo Dyrektora Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań A. Skarżyńskiego do biskupów polskich zarzucające hierarchii kościelnej działalność sprzeczną z porządkiem prawnym PRL z dnia 17 sierpnia 1967 r.* [A letter from the Director of the Office for Religious Matters A. Skarżyński to Polish bishops in which he accused the Church hierarchy of the activity contradicting the legal order of PRL from 17 August 1967], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, pp. 440-441.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. J. ŻARYN, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, p. 272.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. A. DUDEK, *Państwo i Kościół 1945-1970*, Kraków 1995, p. 224-227.

On the other hand, he thinks that all church links should now go to great lengths to strengthen and extend the influence of the Church on the society using religious, and not political means".<sup>14</sup> That reply was an enormous surprise and did not satisfy the party management since the fulfilment of Cardinal Wojtyła's desideratum would be synonymous to a failure of 10-years' work of Gomułka team. It is not surprising then that they stood firmly on the position of countermining everything that strengthened the Church.<sup>15</sup>

Besides, in the 1960's the Church took part in an international event – the Second Vatican Council. However, that experience – due to the presence of censorship and the fact that the state commented upon any events in the categories of current politics – could not be complete. The participation of Polish Catholics in the event which was significant on the scale of the Church and the whole world was limited to the minimum not because of the provincial attitude of the Polish Episcopate but above all as a result of the approach of the political authorities of the country which restricted the possibilities of conducting free discussion on theology and the view on the world.<sup>16</sup>

The 1970's witnessed the softening of the religious policy of the state. On 20 December, 1970 a decision was taken at the Seventh Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party to remove W. Gomułka and his closest associates from power, and choose E. Gierek to replace the former.<sup>17</sup> E. Gierek began his rule with the motto of "burying the hatchet in the war with the Church". One element of these tactics was to give up conflicts on the political forum but not in specific actions. The Episcopate, however, decisively spoke up for the rights of the Catholics that went beyond the strictly ecclesiastical domain and teaching and education belonged to the issues that the Episcopate was deeply concerned about. In 1972 the Polish bishops came out with memorials referring to the condition of youth education and religious freedom.<sup>18</sup> The first memorial of the Polish Episcopate was submitted in March 1972 to the Committee of Experts called to prepare a report on the state of education in PRL

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<sup>14</sup> *Pismo kierownika Wydziału do Spraw Wyznań Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej w Kielcach S. Jarosza do Urzędu do Spraw Wyznań w Warszawie o zainteresowaniu duchowieństwa wydarzeniami w Czechosłowacji z dnia 14 października 1968 r.* [A letter of the head of the Department for the Matters of Religion of the Presidium of the Voivodship National Council in Kielce, S. Jarosz to the Office for the Matters of Religion in Warsaw on the interest shown by the clergy in the events in Czechoslovakia from 14 October, 1968], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, pp. 527-528.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Kościół w Polsce 1945-2002*, Radom 2003, p. 195.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. ŻARYN, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, p. 291.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. A. CZUBIŃSKI, *Historia Polski XX wieku*, Poznań 2000, pp. 299-300.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 583; Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Kościół w Polsce 1945-2002*, pp. 214; 251.

with regard to youth education. The postulates put forward in the memorial focused directly on the problems connected with the Church teaching the Truths of Faith. They concerned, among other things, the following things:

- guaranteeing full freedom of catechetical work, for example abolishing the ordinance of the Minister of Education from 19 August 1961 on running catechetical centres,
- securing a sufficient number of manuals and didactic aids necessary for catechization,
- recommending coordination of school and catechetical classes,
- ceasing to forbid the youth to participate in sacral life and religious practices at camps, in boarding schools, special institutions, children's homes,
- giving up repressions towards the clergy who worked with youth outside catechization activity and outside the church,
- giving up the pressure on parents not to send their children for religious instruction.<sup>19</sup>

Besides, the memorial drew attention to the values absent in socialist education. They included enabling a young person to consciously choose a view on the world, rooting education in the whole historical tradition of the nation and securing full freedom to young people without the limitations placed in the conditions put by the party.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the above-mentioned memorial dealt with the problems related to catechization at the same time reaching for educational issues in a global understanding concerning the state, the family and the Church.

The next memorial was submitted by the Polish Episcopate in October of 1972. This time it was devoted to the problem of religious freedom as the basis for normalization of the relations between the State and the Church. The document declared that the state as an institution called for common good should fully realize the principle of religious freedom, which is the direct civil right of people and communities whereas the State acted against this principle, which was seen in programmed secularization taking place in school, pre-school education, the army, institutions of educational character and others. Besides, schools enforced an atheist view contradicting the views professed by parents. Summing up the realization of the principle of religious freedom in Poland, the Episcopate concluded: “the Catholic family in Poland does not enjoy adequate religious free-

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. *Memorial Episkopatu Polski do Komitetu Ekspertów powołanego do opracowania raportu o stanie oświaty w PRL w sprawie wychowania młodzieży z dnia 23 marca 1972 r.* [A Memorial of the Polish Episcopate to the Committee of Experts called to prepare a report on the state of education in PRL with regard to youth education from 23 March 1972], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 589.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Kościół w Polsce 1945-2002*, pp. 252-253.

dom since the educational system binding in schools completely removed religious education; moreover, the main goal set by state schools is atheist education – the model enforced upon the majority of Catholic parents against their convictions despite an official declaration that school should not spread atheism.”<sup>21</sup>

Successive declarations of the Episcopate on teaching and education were even more firm. In May 1973 the bishops protested emphatically against so-called collective schools seeing in them an attempt to draw the youth away from catechization, which would not be allowed enough time. It also meant limiting the parents influence on the way their children were brought up.<sup>22</sup> However, those and other statements of the Episcopate on the teaching of youth and children were fruitless. The so-called normalization of the relations state-Church could not be put into effect since the goals set by the Church were different from those that the government wanted to achieve. The government’s plans in the field of arranging the relations between the State and the Church distinctly differed from the concept of normalization which was repeatedly suggested by the Polish Episcopate.<sup>23</sup>

According to Z. Zieliński, the assumptions of the religious policy of the government in the 1970’s can be summarized in the following points:

- a) Loyalty of the Church towards the state and observance of all state acts and regulations;
- b) The influence of the state on the principal organizational and personal problems of the Church;
- c) Agreeing with the authorities on the statute of the Plenary Conference of the Polish Episcopate and introducing periodical elections of the chairman of the conference as well as coordinating the candidacy for this position with the government;
- d) A real possibility of removing the clergymen who break the state regulations from Church positions;
- e) The state’s supervision over theological seminaries and prohibition of creating papal universities without the consent of state authorities;

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<sup>21</sup> *Memorial Episkopatu Polski do Rządu o wolności religijnej jako podstawie normalizacji stosunków pomiędzy Państwem a Kościołem z dnia 31 października 1972 r.* [A memorial of the Polish Episcopate to the Government on religious freedom as the basis for normalization of the relations between the State and the Church from 31 October 1972], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 607.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Komunikat Konferencji Plenarnej Episkopatu Polski w sprawie jednolitego systemu wychowania przez państwo z dnia 4 maja 1973 r.* [A Communiqué of the Plenary Session of the Polish Episcopate on a uniform system of education by the state from 4 May 1975], [in:] P. RAINA, *Kościół w PRL*, p. 614.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Z. ZIELIŃSKI, *Kościół w Polsce 1945-2002*, pp. 258-259.

f) The influence of PRL authorities on pastoral ministry in the Polonia community and settlements on the appointment of its bishop.<sup>24</sup>

Naturally, those were the assumptions with which the Polish Episcopate could not agree because their consequence would be that the government of PRL would to a large extent obtain power over the Church in Poland. However, thanks to the care and political intuition of Primate Wyszyński, who was supported by the Polish Episcopate, this did not happen.

Against the background of what happened in our country in the 1970's, sensational news came about the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyła to be the Pope. All media reported it as an event which was not only religious but also political in character since it came from a communist country where despite the 35 years of the authorities fighting with religion, faith remained the inspiration for the majority of the society. The election of John Paul II focused the international attention on Poland. It was noticed that this choice brings to mind the thought about the unity of culture artificially divided by the Yalta Conference, and that the Polish Pope could stop the illusions of the progress realized by force. The authorities of PRL stated that the choice of Cardinal Wojtyła should be accepted at face value.<sup>25</sup> The propaganda even suggested that the choice was the result of "socialism" developing in PRL.<sup>26</sup> The choice of Cardinal Wojtyła soon brought the fruit of the Pope's first visit in the country of real socialism, in Poland in June 1979. The visit of John Paul II opened the way leading to the formation of an Independent Self-governing Trade Union "Solidarity" (NSZZ "Solidarność"), and in further perspective to the step called independence. Meanwhile, Poland – gaining the papal authority in Rome – underwent a transformation.<sup>27</sup>

The years 1981-1989 was the period when a visible increase of the Church potential took place, which was the consequence of firstly, the beginning of John Paul II's term as pontiff, and next the appearance of the „Solidarity” movement. This could be seen in an enormous number of candidates for priesthood and of sa-

<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 260.

<sup>25</sup> In reality, however, fear and helplessness prevailed. This is shown, for example, in the words of Kazimierz Kąkol, the head of the Office for the Matters of Religion at that time: Comrades Kania, Kowalczyk, Olszowski, Werblan, Łukaszewicz confer, absolutely disgusted. Visible consternation. Olszowski spills a cup of black coffee on his light trousers. Sighs. Heavy sighs. Czyrek comes up with a thesis – worked out by us on the way from SDP (Association of Polish Journalists) to KC (Central Committee) – „let's think . . . after all, Wojtyła is better as a Pope there than as a Primate here. The thesis is catchy. It hits the target. Relief.” Quoted after: A. DUDEK, *Ślady PeeReLu. Ludzie, wydarzenia, mechanizmy*, Kraków 2000, p. 141.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. W. ROSZKOWSKI, *Historia Polski 1914-1991*, p. 418.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. J. ŻARYN, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce*, p 291.



cral buildings as well as in a very fast development of Catholic press and publishing houses. Besides, Churches and religious associations obtained a possibility of carrying out catechization in hospitals, sanatoriums, welfare institutions of the departments of health and social care,<sup>28</sup> in penitential institutions, detention institutions and social adjustment centres<sup>29</sup> as well as in penal institutions and shelters for juveniles.<sup>30</sup>

Those facts caused the authorities to begin to treat the unexpected increase of Church authority as an inevitable cost of its neutralization in the period of marshal law<sup>31</sup> and hence they did not intend to give up the old plans, which was clearly stated in a document prepared on 10 April 1986 in the Social and Legal Department of KC PZPR and next accepted by the Secretariat of KC: "The years 1986-1987 should be the beginning of regaining many social areas taken by the Church in the 1980's where the latter had been absent or pushed out before."<sup>32</sup>

Nevertheless, those militant announcements, followed by the offensive actions of Security Services (for example, kidnapping and assassinating Father Jerzy Popiełuszko<sup>33</sup>) were accompanied by an increasing feeling of bankruptcy in the state's religious policy. In 1986, 66% of PZPR members declared themselves to be believers.<sup>34</sup>

Seeing the continuous increase of the Church authority and at the same time taking the above-mentioned data into consideration, General Jaruzelski stated at the sitting of the Secretariat of KC PZPR in April 1987: "Comrades, our party is carrying an awful hump, not only of crises but also a hump of religiosity (. . .)

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Instructions of the Minister of Health and Social Care from 9 September 1981 on securing religious services to the sick staying in hospitals, sanatoriums and welfare institutions of the departments of health and social care "Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Zdrowia i Opieki Społecznej" [Official Journal of the Minister of Health and Social Care] 1981, No. 09, item 35.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Ordinance of the Minister of Justice no. 33/81/CZZK from 17 September 1981 on the performance of religious practices and services in penitential institutions, detention institutions and social adjustment centres, "Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Sprawiedliwości" [Official Journal of the Minister of Justice] 1981, No. 05, item 27.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Ordinance of the Minister of Justice from 10 September 1981 on the performance of religious practices in houses of correction and shelters for juveniles, "Wiadomości Diecezjalne Lubelskie" 1981, No. 11-12 1981, pp. 277-289; A. MEZGLEWSKI, *Nauczanie religii*, p. 34

<sup>31</sup> Cf. A. DUDEK, *Polityka władz Polski Ludowej wobec Kościoła katolickiego – trwanie i zmiana*, [in:] *Represje wobec osób duchownych i konsekrowanych w PRL w latach 1944-1989*, A. GRZEŚKOWIAK, Lublin 2004, p. 19.

<sup>32</sup> A note "New elements in religious policy" from 10 April 1986, quoted after: A. DUDEK, *Polityka władz Polski Ludowej*, p. 19.

<sup>33</sup> More on this subject: P. RAINA, *Ks. Jerzy Popiełuszko – męczennik za wiarę i Ojczyznę*, vol. 1-3, Olsztyn 1990.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. A. DUDEK, *Polityka władz Polski Ludowej*, p. 20.

Fifty percent of the First Secretaries of the Basic Party Organizations (POP) define themselves as believers (. . .) generally, we can count on them in politically hard moments, but they are not communists to the core, as we would wish them to be. One cannot be a communist, at the same time sitting in a church-porch. But the situation is like that and we have to live with it, do our best to change it but this is a difficult and long process.”<sup>35</sup> Those announcements, however, were to face the new political and social situation in the country which underwent a fairly fast transformation.

In the situation of an increasing social and economic crisis, after John Paul II's second pilgrimage to homeland (16-23 June 1983), talks were restored in the Common Committee, but they were interrupted in 1983.<sup>36</sup> “The epilogue of that work concurred with the outcomes of the preparations for the round table,” starting the process of profound political changes in Poland.

## 2. DEMOCRATIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STATE'S RELIGIOUS POLICY IN THE YEARS 1989-2000

Decisive changes took place in the sphere of relations the state-Church on the basis of the “agreements of the round table” signed on 5 April 1989 between representatives of the communist authorities and the opposition represented by “Solidarity”. Two legislative events testify to that.<sup>37</sup> The first was the Sejm passing the so-called “package of religious acts” on 17 May 1989, namely:

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<sup>35</sup> A protocol from the sitting of the Secretariat of KC PZPR, 4 April 1987, “Archiwum Akt Nowych”, KC PZPR, catalogue no. VII/83, p. 79; Further on, General Jaruzelski analyzed the popularity of the Church in Poland: “This Church, however, apart from the fact of having a political bait, bends over this man. (. . .) They visit each family at Christmas time. Of course, they take what they get but they talk, they stroke on the head, leave the wholly bread, they are (. . .) there at the most important moments in man's life or a family's tragedy. They are with a child teaching religion, and now they will even increase their influence, and are we like that? After all, we are in greater numbers. There are 20,000 priests in Poland totally. We cannot count only full-time workers – the party's apparatus, we should at least include members of instances as our activists. This makes 10 times more, and if we consider administration and many others, then our army is by far stronger, but it does not act like that” (p. 80).

<sup>36</sup> More on the genesis of the “round table”, in: J. Skórzyński, *Ugoda i rewolucja. Władza i opozycja 1985-1989*, Warszawa 1995; Idem, „Solidarność” w drodze do Okrągłego Stołu. Strategia polityczna opozycji 1985-1989, [in:] *Polska 1986-1989: koniec systemu. Materiały międzynarodowej konferencji, Miedzeszyn, 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>th</sup> October 1999*, eds. A. DUDEK, A. PACZKOWSKI, P. MACHCEWICZ, vol. I: Warszawa 2002; A. DUDEK, *Pierwsze lata III Rzeczypospolitej 1989-1995*, Warszawa 1997.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. J. KRUKOWSKI, *Kościół i Państwo. Podstawy relacji prawnych*, Lublin 1993, p. 218.

1. Act of State to the Catholic Church Relations in the Republic of Poland,<sup>38</sup>
2. Act of guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion;<sup>39</sup>
3. Act of social insurance of the clergy.<sup>40</sup>

The other event was the decision taken by John Paul II on 17 July 1983 in agreement with the highest organs of the state authority and the Conference of the Polish Episcopate on resuming permanent diplomatic relations between the Apostolic See and Poland.<sup>41</sup>

Those two momentous events resulted in huge changes in the religious policy of the state. Since then, matters with which both the state and the Church were concerned were to be settled according to the principle of subject equivalence in their domains and not by way of jurisdiction – from the position of the state's supremacy over the Church, as was imposed in the program of the communist authorities.<sup>42</sup>

Passing from communist totalitarianism to democracy met with problems and not only in the sphere of economy but in the fields of culture and education as well. The subject of teaching religion in schools was resumed. In “religious acts”, the communist authorities guaranteed parents the right to educate their children according to their religious convictions<sup>43</sup> as well as the right of the Church to teach and educate children and youth at catechetical centres according to their parents' will;<sup>44</sup> however, they lacked guarantees that the parents' right to educate their children according to their convictions should be respected within school education. Hence, despite the signing of a compromise “agreement of the round table,” the state authorities then did not agree to introduce any entry on the possibility of teaching religion in schools.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Act of State to the Catholic Church Relations in the Republic of Poland of 17 May 1989, “Dziennik Ustaw” [Journal of Laws] 1989, No. 29, item 154, as amended [further on, quoted as The act of state to the Catholic Church relations].

<sup>39</sup> Act of guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion of 17 May 1989, “Dziennik Ustaw” [Journal of Laws] 1989, No. 29, item 155, as amended [further on, quoted as The act of guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion].

<sup>40</sup> Act of social insurance of the clergy of 17 May 1989, “Dziennik Ustaw” [Journal of Laws] 1989, No. 29, item 156.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. J. KRUKOWSKI, *Kościół i Państwo*, p. 218.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. R. KAMIŃSKI, *Podstawowe uwarunkowania życia i działalności Kościoła w Polsce*, p. 248.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Article 2 item 4 of The act of guarantees of freedom of conscience and religion.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Article 19 of The act of state to the Catholic Church relations.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. J. KRUKOWSKI, *Stanowisko Kościoła katolickiego w relacji do państwa w sprawie nauczania religii w szkołach*, [in:] *Nauczanie religii w szkole w państwie demokratycznym*, ed. J. KRUKOWSKI, Lublin 1991, p. 18.

When the process of going away from the communist system became a more and more consolidated phenomenon, the postulate of opening the schools for religion teaching was put forward again.<sup>46</sup> Those postulates were accepted by the majority of the Polish society. However, they gave rise to strong protests from the post-communist leftist movement and certain unrest among the non-Catholic Churches. Above all, the mass media controlled by ex-communists started protests and accusations that the teaching of religion in schools would cause intolerance. A negative attitude in this matter was initially also taken up by representatives of the Ministry of National Education.<sup>47</sup> Finally, however, the talks conducted within the Common Committee consisting of representatives of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate and the government of the Republic of Poland were concluded with stating the need to introduce religious teaching in schools in the new school year.

As a consequence, the Minister of National Education issued instructions in this matter concerning resuming religious instruction in schools in the year 1990/1991. The first one from 3 August 1990 was issued in an agreement with the Conference of the Polish Episcopate<sup>48</sup> while the other from 24 August 1990 was prepared in an agreement with representatives of non-Catholic Churches.<sup>49</sup> By virtue of those instructions, teaching religion was introduced in the form of a facultative subject in all public schools subordinated to the Minister of Education. The decision of the facultative character of religious instruction was undertaken with the aim of guaranteeing maximum religious freedom and pluralism concerning religion and views on the world. In this form, participation in the lessons of religion is dependent on a positive declaration to do it. Consequently, participation in school catechesis was made dependent on parents' free decision or – in secondary schools – on the students themselves. Teaching religion was guaranteed to the followers of non-Catholic religions if an adequate group of them should be found in a school.

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. J. KRUKOWSKI, *Drzwi dla religii jeszcze zamknięte*, "Ład. Tygodnik katolicki", 11 March 1990, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. J. KRUKOWSKI, *Kościół i Państwo*, p. 237.

<sup>48</sup> Instruction of the Minister of National Education from 3 August 1990 on restoring religious instruction in schools in the school year 1990/1991 [mps.].

<sup>49</sup> Instruction of the Minister of National Education from 24 August 1990 on restoring religious instruction in schools in the school year 1990/1991, establishing the principles of cooperation with churches and religious associations outside the Roman Catholic church [mps.].

Stabilization of teaching religion in Polish public schools took place only by virtue of the act from 7 September 1991 on the system of education,<sup>50</sup> and next the ordinance of the Minister of National Education from 14 April 1992 concerning the conditions and ways of teaching religion in public school.<sup>51</sup> The above documents really stabilized the facultative system of teaching religion or ethics in schools.

The present system of relations between the State and the Church in Poland is based on the Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 2 April 1997<sup>52</sup> and the Concordat concluded between the Apostolic See and the Republic of Poland from 28 July 1993 and next ratified on 23 February 1998.<sup>53</sup> The most important regulations from the field of denominational law were grouped in Articles 25 and 53 of RP Constitution and in 29 articles of the Concordat.

Analyzing the regulations of the binding Constitution one can conclude that the principle of the freedoms of conscience and religion contained in Article 53 is of fundamental importance to the Polish denominational law. This principle determines in detail the rights of individual people in the sphere of religious freedom. The source of this freedom is a human person's dignity rooted in natural law, and the subject of the constitutional guarantee of religious freedom is each person.<sup>54</sup> The RP Constitution also establishes the state's relation to churches and other religious associations, which is summarized in 5 major principles:<sup>55</sup>

1. The principle of equality of churches and religious associations. The Constitution adopts a general principle that all religious associations are equal subjects. This principle in its positive aspect means that churches and other religious associations are to be treated identically by the state. Law cannot and should not distinguish between them. On the other hand, the principle of equality of the churches in the negative aspect means a general prohibition of privileges. That is why in its legislative policy the state cannot grant any special rights to one of the churches while the other churches and religious associations have the same attribute.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> The act the system of education from 7 September 1991, "Dziennik Ustaw" [Journal of Laws] 1996, No. 67, item 329, as amended.

<sup>51</sup> The ordinance of the Minister of National Education from 14 April 1992 on the conditions and ways of organizing religious instruction in public nursery schools and schools, "Dziennik Ustaw" [Journal of Laws] 1992, No. 36, item 155, as amended.

<sup>52</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Poland from 2 April 1997 [abbreviation: RP Constitution], "Dziennik Ustaw" [Journal of Laws] 1997, No. 78, item 483, as amended.

<sup>53</sup> Concordat from 28 July 1993 between the Apostolic See and the Republic of Poland from 28 July 1993 [abbreviation: Concordat], "Dziennik Ustaw" [Journal of Laws] 1998, No. 51, item 318.

<sup>54</sup> Article 53 item 3 and Article 48 item 1 of RP Constitution.

<sup>55</sup> Article 25 of RP Constitution; H. MISZTAŁ, *Konstytucyjne podstawy polskiego prawa wyznaniowego*, [in:] *Prawo wyznaniowe*, eds. H. MISZTAŁ, P. STANISZ, Lublin 2003, p. 189.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Article 25, item 1 and Article 32, item 1 of the RP Constitution.

2. The principle of impartiality of state authorities towards religious convictions. The term “Impartiality” written in the Constitution should be understood as a lack of interference from public authorities either into the interior matters of churches and religious associations or in the life of particular people in the aspects of their views on religion and on the world or philosophical ones. Impartiality cannot lead to a situation in which public authorities (in the name of democracy) will spread nihilism or lack of ideas. Hence, impartiality cannot be understood as eliminating certain threads from public life but rather as the postulate of securing the same possibilities of expressing all views concerning religion, philosophy or the world.<sup>57</sup>

3. The principle of respecting autonomy and independence. It means rejecting the concept of a religious state, at the same time excluding the concept of the state’s superiority over churches and other religious associations. Besides, Article 25 item 3 of the Constitution speaks of respecting the autonomy and independence of both communities (church and state ones) “in their spheres”. Therefore, the state is competent only in the scope of mundane order, whereas the churches and other religious associations – within the scope of spiritual order.<sup>58</sup>

4. The principle of cooperation for man’s and common good. The necessity of this cooperation results from the ancillary role of the church and the state towards the same people who are at the same time members of both these communities. The help from the Church and the state is to enable each person to achieve the full development of their personality and for the common good.<sup>59</sup>

5. The principle of bilateralness. It concerns the form of regulating the relations between the State and the Catholic Church and other religious associations. According to the Constitution, the relations between the Republic of Poland and the Catholic Church are to be established according to an international agreement concluded with the Apostolic See and agreements.<sup>60</sup> On the other hand, the relations between the Republic of Poland and other churches and religious associations are to be determined in acts on the basis of agreements concluded by the Council of Ministers with their proper representatives.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Article 25, item 2 of RP Constitution; H. MISZTAŁ, *Konstytucyjne podstawy*, p. 199.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. H. Misztal, *Konstytucyjne podstawy*, p. 199.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Article 25, item 3 of RP Constitution; J. KRUKOWSKI, K. WARCHAŁOWSKI, *Polskie prawo wyznaniowe*, Warszawa 2000, p. 63; J. KRUKOWSKI, *Religia i wolność religijna w Polsce w procesie integracji Europejskiej*, [in:] *Materiały IV Międzynarodowej Konferencji na temat “Religia i wolność religijna w państwach Europy Środkowo-wschodniej w perspektywie integracji europejskiej” Lublin, 1-2 września 2003*, ed. J. KRUKOWSKI, Lublin 2004, p. 105.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Article 25, item 4 of RP Constitution.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Article 25, item 5 of RP Constitution.

The binding Concordat concluded between the Apostolic See and the Republic of Poland also has a special importance among the sources of Polish denominational law. Guarantees entered into the Concordat provide specification of the norms in the RP Constitution.<sup>62</sup> The addressees of Concordat guarantees are Catholics in the individual dimension and the Catholic Church in the community dimension.

In Article 3 of the Concordat the state guarantees the Catholic Church the freedom of maintaining relations and communication between the Apostolic See and the bishops as well as between the Conference of the Polish Episcopate and particular bishops in Poland and bishops of other countries. Besides, the Concordat guarantees free and public fulfilment of the Church's mission and jurisdiction, freedom in making changes in its territorial structure as well as independence of the Church authorities in the sphere of appointing bishops and candidates for other Church offices.<sup>63</sup> The Concordat also specifies the regulations concerning the freedom of the Church in worship, respecting Sunday and festive day, protecting marriage and family, teaching religion in nursery schools, public schools, Catholic universities and Catholic educational institutions.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the Concordat regulates the problem of special ministry, access of the Church to the mass media and certain issues pertaining to the financial situation of the Church.<sup>65</sup>

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the analysis above, one can conclude that ideological assumptions of the authorities of the Polish People's Republic consistently aimed at the complete elimination of religious instruction from schools.

While analyzing the assumptions of the state's denominational policy towards catechetical teaching in the years 1961-2001, the present paper distinguishes two periods. The first covered the years 1961-1989. At that time the goal of the state authorities was to limit the influence of the Church, which is why the religious policy of the state was focused on removing religion from schools, on censorship, persecuting the clergy and discriminating against the faithful.

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<sup>62</sup> Cf. P. STANISZ, *System źródeł prawa wyznaniowego*, [in:] *Prawo wyznaniowe*, eds. H. MISZTAŁ, P. STANISZ, Lublin 2003, p. 180.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Articles 5; 6; 7 of the Concordat.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Articles 8; 9; 10; 12; 14; 15 of the Concordat.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. P. STANISZ, *System źródeł prawa*, pp. 175-176.

The other period included the years 1989-2001. That was the time of political transformation and the formation of democratic assumptions in the religious policy of the state. The present system of legal sources of denominational law was almost completely shaped after the democratic changes that took place after 1989 and after the so-called “package of religious acts” was passed, while the process of normalization in the relations between state and Church was consolidated thanks to the Concordat and the RP Constitution, where the position of churches and religious associations was recognized.<sup>66</sup>

It was at that time that religion returned to schools by virtue of the act from 7 September 1991 on the system education.<sup>67</sup> This confirms the fact that after 1989 in Poland the process of political transformation and passing from the period of breaking human rights or only recognizing them in name only to the period of actually recognizing and respecting them really took place.

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. P. STANISZ, *System źródeł prawa*, pp. 175-176.

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RELIGIOUS POLICY IN POLAND  
TOWARDS CATECHETICAL TEACHING  
IN THE YEARS 1961-2001

S u m m a r y

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed by the United Nations Organization in 1948 proclaims man's rights to liberties of thought, conscience and religion. The Declaration emphasizes that this right also includes the freedom to profess one's religion or faith, individually or in a community, publicly or privately, through teaching, practising, worship or observance of customs. A clear emphasis of man's right to get to know the principles of faith (both in the teaching of Church and the statements of the United Nations Organization) was influenced by the experiences of the Church in totalitarian system in recent decades, and especially in the system based on Marxist ideology. It was the situation in which the Church remained in Poland since World War II till 1989, constituting a part of the social organism that was forced to live in co-existence with the communist system. Hence, it was difficult to expect a compromise or – even more – a favourable attitude on the part of the state authorities as far as catechetical teaching of that period was concerned. In the times of PRL, the law, administration acts and regulations served as means to strengthen the communist rule and subordinate all spheres of social and state life to it. The legal system did not give any guarantees of respecting the rights of a human person and, what is more, it limited the age-old rights of the Church, including the right to teach religion. The situation underwent a decisive change only after 1989 as a result of the political transformation, when the totalitarian communist system was replaced by a democratic one. The present article covers the years 1961-2001, which is from the moment when religious instruction was removed from school till the promulgation of the Polish catechetical directory.

**Key words:** catechetical teaching; religious policy; religious associations; teaching religion.

POLSKA POLITYKA RELIGIJNA  
WOBEC KATECHIZACJI W LATACH 1961-2001

S t r e s z c z e n i e

Powszechna Deklaracja Praw Człowieka uchwalona przez Organizację Narodów Zjednoczonych w 1948 r. proklamuje prawa człowieka do wolności myśli, sumienia i wyznania. Deklaracja podkreśla, że prawo to obejmuje również wolność głoszenia swego wyznania lub wiary, bądź indywidualnie, bądź wspólnie z innymi ludźmi, publicznie i prywatnie, poprzez nauczanie, praktykowanie, uprawianie kultu i przestrzeganie obyczajów. Na wyraźne podkreślenie prawa człowieka do poznawania zasad wiary (zarówno w nauczaniu Kościoła, jak i oświadczeniach Organizacji Narodów Zjednoczonych) wpływ miały doświadczenia Kościoła w systemie totalitarnym w ostatnich dekadach, a zwłaszcza w systemie opartym na ideologii marksistowskiej. Taka właśnie była sytuacja, w jakiej od II wojny światowej do 1989 r. znajdował się w Polsce Kościół, stanowiący część organizmu społecznego, który był zmuszony koegzystować z ustrojem komunistycznym. Dlatego trudno było oczekiwać kompromisu czy – tym bardziej – przychylniej postawy ze strony władz państwowych wobec katechizacji w owym okresie. W czasach PRL prawo, akty i przepisy administracyjne służyły jako środek wzmocnienia rządów komunistycznych i podporządkowania im wszyst-

kich sfer życia społecznego i państwowego. System prawny nie dawał żadnych gwarancji przestrzegania praw osoby ludzkiej i, co więcej, ograniczał on pradawne prawa Kościoła, w tym prawo do nauczania religii. Sytuacja uległa radykalnej zmianie po 1989 r., jako wynik transformacji politycznej, kiedy to totalitarny ustrój komunistyczny został zastąpiony ustrojem demokratycznym. Niniejszy artykuł obejmuje lata 1961-2001, to jest od momentu, gdy nauczanie religii zostało usunięte ze szkół, do promulgowania Dyrektorium katechetycznego Kościoła Katolickiego w Polsce.

**Słowa kluczowe:** katechizacja; polityka religijna; związki religijne; nauczanie religii.

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