
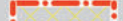
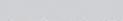



Kazimiera Jaworska (ed.)

# **Catholic Church in Lower Silesia against Communism (1945-1974)**

# LEGEND

-  state borders
-  Apostolic Administration of Lower Silesia
-  borders of counties of Lower Silesia
-  county towns in the Apostolic Administration of Lower Silesia



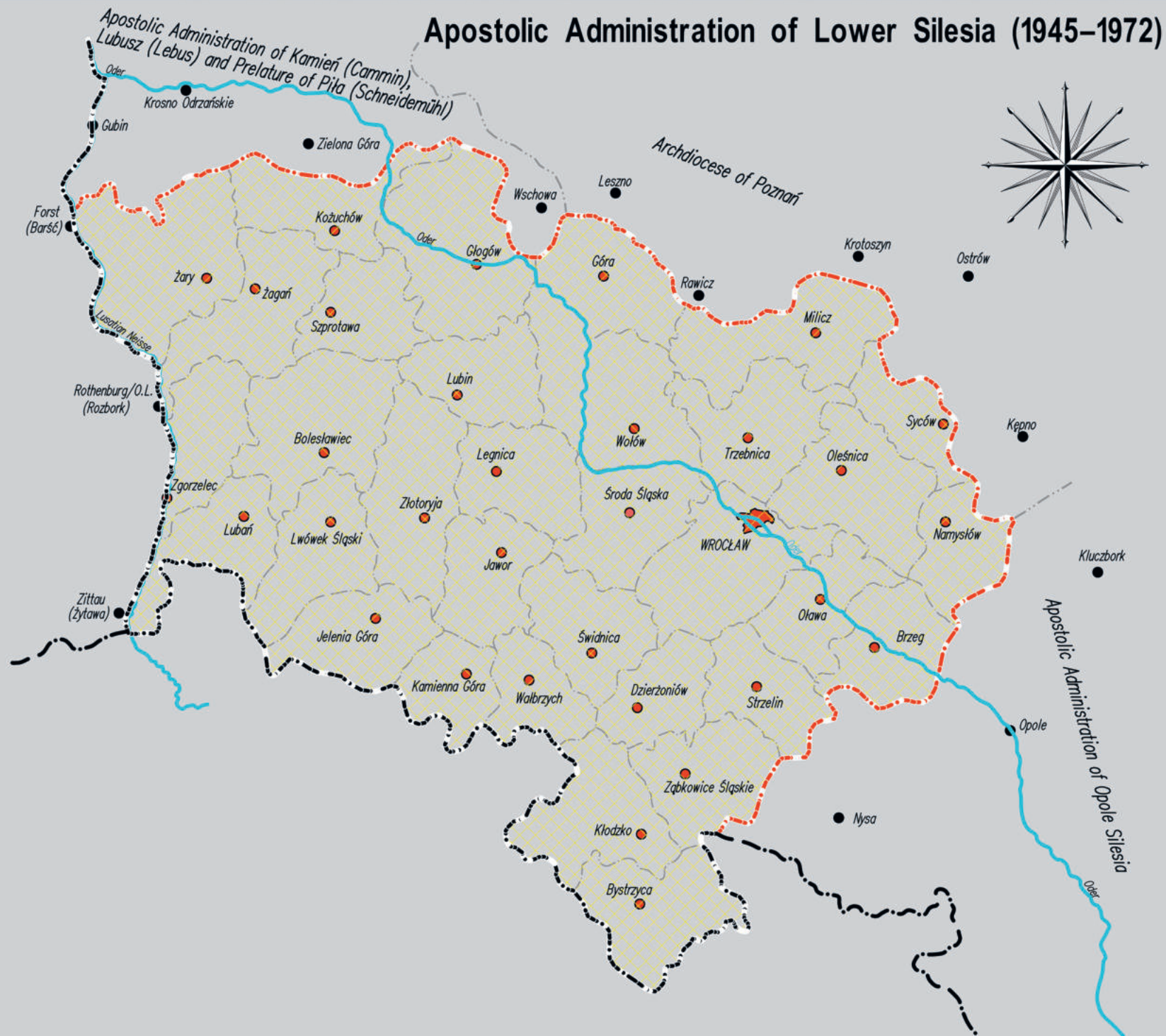
Coat of arms of Cardinal August Hlond  
Primate of Poland (1926–1948)



Coat of arms of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński  
Primate of Poland (1948–1981)



Coat of arms of Cardinal Bolesław Kominek  
Governor of the Wrocław Church (1956–1974)  
Metropolitan Archbishop of Wrocław (1972–1974)





# Eastern and Central European Voices

Studies in Theology and Religion

Edited by

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Volume 4

Kazimiera Jaworska (ed.)

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against Communism (1945–1974)**

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## List of abbreviations

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| AA Kat      | Archives of the Archdiocese in Katowice  |
| AAN         | Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych) in Warsaw   |
| AA Wr       | Archives of the Archdiocese in Wrocław   |
| AIPN BU     | Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) Access Office                         |
| AIPN Wr     | Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej) Branch in Wrocław                     |
| AKM Wr      | Archives of the Wrocław Metropolitan Curia   |
| APT         | Archives of the Parish of Saint Bartholomew the Apostle and Saint Hedwig in Trzebnica                                |
| AP Wr       | State Archives in Wrocław  |
| ARS         | Acts of the Office for School Education at the Wrocław Curia   |
| ASKEP       | Archives of the Secretariat of the Polish Bishops' Conference  |
| ASKG        | “Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte”   |
| ASMI B      | Archives of the Sisters of Mary Immaculate in Branice  |
| ASOF        | Archives of the Social Observatory Foundation, Wrocław   |
| AU Wr       | Archives of the University of Wrocław  |
| Dz. U.      | “Dziennik Ustaw” [“Journal of Laws”]   |
| Dz. U. M.O. | “Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Oświaty” [“Official Journal of the Ministry of Education”]                               |
| IPN         | Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej)   |
| KC PZPR     | Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (Komitet Centralny Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej)   |
| KW PZPR     | Regional Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (Komitet Wojewódzki Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej) |
| MAP         | Ministry of Public Administration (Ministerstwo Administracji Publicznej)  |
| MBP         | Ministry of Public Security (Ministerstwo Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego)  |
| PRL         | Polish People's Republic (Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa)  |
| PRN         | District National Council (Powiatowa Rada Narodowa)  |
| PRN Wr      | District National Council (Powiatowa Rada Narodowa) of Wrocław   |
| PUBP        | District Office of Public Security (Powiatowy Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego)                                      |
| PWRN        | Presidium of the Regional National Council (Prezydium Wojewódzkiej Rady Narodowej)                                   |
| PPRN        | Presidium of the District National Council (Prezydium Powiatowej Rady Narodowej)                                     |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| PZPR  | Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza)                                |
| SAiW  | Association of Atheists and Freethinkers (Ogólnopolskie Stowarzyszenie Ateistów i Wolnomyślicieli) |
| sygn. | catalogue number (Polish: sygnatura)   |
| TŚŚ   | Secular School Association (Towarzystwo Szkoły Świeckiej)  |
| UBP   | Office of Public Security (Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego)                                       |
| UdSW  | Office for Religious Affairs (Urząd do Spraw Wyznań)   |
| USSR  | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (Russian: Soyuz Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublik)      |
| WdSW  | Department for Religious Affairs (Wydział do Spraw Wyznań)   |
| WUBP  | Regional Office of Public Security (Wojewódzki Urząd Bezpieczeństwa Publicznego)                   |
| WWK   | “Wrocławskie Wiadomości Kościelne” [“Wrocław Ecclesiastical Bulletin”]                             |

Kazimiera Jaworska

## Preface of the editor

The effects of World War Two had a fundamental impact on the post-war history of Lower Silesia. The borders and territory of the Polish state were changed because of the decisions made by the superpowers in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam. Joseph Stalin wanted to have an ethnically homogeneous Poland. The area of the state shrunk by almost 20% (from 388 to 312 thousand km<sup>2</sup>). The Eastern Borderlands (47% of the territory of pre-war Poland) were definitively incorporated into the victorious USSR, while the Polish eastern border was drawn along the Bug and Narew Rivers. As compensation, the territorially truncated Poland was allocated the former East German provinces, known as the Recovered Territories or Western and Northern Territories, which accounted for 33.4% of its post-war area. This decision resulted in moving the western border of the country to the Oder and Lusatian Neisse Rivers.<sup>1</sup>

The consequence of the territorial changes was resettlement and displacement of the population on both sides of the borders on an unprecedented scale. This process also affected Lower Silesia, which until 1945 had been inhabited by Germans, mainly Protestants, through the Catholic element was also strongly present here, and the pastoral ministry in the then Breslau Archdiocese was one of the most vibrant and exemplary in Germany. The displaced German population was replaced by forcibly resettled Poles, mainly from the eastern borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, the vast majority of whom were Catholic.<sup>2</sup>

These transformations posed a considerable challenge for the Church, not only because of the need to organise administrative structures in the area, but also in view of the need to cope with the new ideological reality. The new authorities immediately began to suppress Catholicism, even if at first it was not done so officially; rather, an appearance of cooperation was kept up. However, as the regime

---

1 A. Friszke, *Polska. Losy państwa i narodu 1939–1989* [Poland. History of the state and the nation 1939–1989], Warszawa 2003, p. 141; R. Gryz, *Episkopat wobec integralności ziem polskich po II wojnie światowej. Wybrane problemy z najnowszej literatury i źródeł* [Episcopate and the integrity of the Polish lands after World War II. Selected problems from modern literature and sources], “Ur Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences” (2020), no. 3, p. 102.

2 D. Sula, *Przesiedlenia pod kontrolą państwa na przykładzie Państwowego Urzędu Repatriacyjnego* [Resettlements under the state control based on the example of the State Repatriation Office], [in:] *Wysiedlenia jako narzędzie polityki ludnościowej w Europie XX wieku* [Displacements as a tool of population policy in 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe], ed. J. Wołoszyn, Lublin 2015, p. 223–244.

grew stronger, repressions against the Catholic Church in Poland intensified in subsequent years.

In this respect, too, a specific situation arose in Lower Silesia, which was to be a “laboratory for building socialism”. The Lower Silesian experience was to be applied to other regions of the country in the future. It was here that the communists started a fierce fight with the Church, assuming in the relatively near future a secularisation of the society living in this region.<sup>3</sup>

Their plan fell through. The policy of the communist state met with the determined offered by the Catholic Church, which in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1974 was managed respectively by the following hierarchs: Karol Milik (1945–1951), Kazimierz Lagosz (1951–1956) and Bolesław Kominek (1956–1974). This volume depicts their difficult struggle with the communist authorities. Admittedly, the years 1945–1974 were not only a period of complicated political realities, but also a time of the canonically unstable Polish church administration. This issue was sensitive enough to cause tensions in relations between the state and the Church. Changes in this regard occurred only in the early 1970s, with the issuing of the bull *Episcoporum Poloniae Coetus*<sup>4</sup> by Pope Paul VI on 28 June 1972, which sanctioned Polish ecclesiastical administration in the Western and Northern Territories. At the same time, it ended a long-standing dispute over the recognition of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse border. The last act in the process of stabilising the Polish ecclesiastical organisation in this area was the decision of the Holy See of 2 February 1973 to appoint the Metropolitan of Wrocław to the College of Cardinals. The placing of the cardinal’s hat on the head of Kominek on 3 March 1973 was not only a tribute to his person, but above all an acknowledgement of Wrocław internationally.<sup>5</sup> Soon after, the Cardinal fell ill and died on 10 March 1974. The efforts of this hierarch to strengthen the Catholic Church in Lower Silesia in close cooperation with Primate Stefan Wyszyński were strongly counteracted by the communist state. Despite the specific conditions in which the Wrocław Archdiocese functioned under the rule of the first Polish cardinal in Wrocław, it was at that time that it transformed into one of the key metropolises of the Catholic Church in Poland.

Although for many years the post-war history of the Catholic Church in Lower Silesia has aroused the interest of researchers and many issues have been worked

3 S. Dąbrowski, *Dolny Śląsk – region specyficzny* [Lower Silesia – a specific region], “Dolny Śląsk” 11 (2005), p. 47.

4 28 June 1972, Rome, *Bull of Pope Paul VI Episcoporum Poloniae coetus*, [in:] *Źródła do dziejów Pomorza Zachodniego* [Sources to the history of Western Pomerania], vol. 14: *Narodziny diecezji szczecińsko-kamieńskiej i koszalińsko-kołobrzeskiej (1945–1975)* [The beginnings of the Diocese of Szczecin and Kamień and the Diocese of Koszalin and Kołobrzeg], comp. K. Kozłowski, Szczecin 2007, p. 114–119.

5 B. Kominek, *Po raz pierwszy w dziejach Polski* [For the first time in the history of Poland], “Colloquium Salutis” 5 (1973), p. 5–14.

out, a number of problems still await investigation and elaboration. In addition, new opportunities in this area arise from the availability of hitherto unknown source materials for research.

In these circumstances, a group of researchers, whose scholarly interests focus on the history of the Catholic Church, made an attempt to look from the perspective of several dozen years at the Church's struggle with the system of the communist state in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1974. The result of their cooperation is the present study consisting of six monographic chapters.

The first two chapters show the policy of the communist authorities towards the Catholic Church in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1974 against the background of the then existing relations between the state and the Church in Poland. Jan Kopiec presented this problem in the years 1945–1956. This period is clearly divided into two parts, imposed by the state authorities, which are represented by the persons of two successive rulers: Rev. Karol Milik and Rev. Kazimierz Lagosz. Each of them saw the essence of their ministry in a different way in the realities of the communist state, which was reflected in the functioning of the church administration entrusted to their leadership. Kazimiera Jaworska in the second chapter presented this issue in the times when the helm was held by Bolesław Kominek, the first Polish cardinal in Wrocław (1956–1974). His activity in the Polish Episcopate and in the forum of the universal Church as well as his uncompromising attitude towards the decisions of the state authorities had a strong impact on almost all aspects of the activity of the Wrocław archdiocese.

The next four chapters were devoted to the detailed issues of the Wrocław Church in the periods indicated in the title of the publication, periods of strong pressure exerted by the communist state apparatus. Grzegorz Sokołowski presented problems connected with theological education in Wrocław (1945–1974), Bogdan Giemza – repressions against male religious orders in Lower Silesia on the example of the Salvatorians in Trzebnica (1945–1974). Agata Mirek, on the other hand, dealt with the repressions of the communist state apparatus against female religious orders in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1956. Finally, Krzysztof Borecki discussed the difficulties in catechising the young generation of Lower Silesians in the years 1947–1974.

Individual chapters of this publication, although rich in content, do not exhaust the complexity of the issue. A fuller understanding of the problems can be achieved by further research, primarily by means of source searches in archival resources that have not yet been available for scientific study. The authors hope, however, that the present publication in such internal systematics will at least partly make known the extremely difficult circumstances in which the Church of Wrocław had to function in the time periods outlined in the title.

Kazimiera Jaworska



Jan Kopiec

## Communist authorities against the Catholic Church in Lower Silesia (1945–1956)

The topic had been known for a time, but after the 1989 political changes, with the opening up of the archives, a full exploration of it was made possible. Earlier, the theme accompanying historical research had been regarded rather as a reflection on the heroism and the feeling of fulfilment occasioned by the territorial transformation of the Polish state and the introduction of a new social system. As a rule, it was presented in a positive light, stemming from a feeling of pride in the achievements derived from the reconstruction of the country and in the adoption of an almost modern form of a functioning state. From the perspective of the past, in Lower Silesia and in all post-German territories allocated to Poland, more complicated aspects of this effort can be seen today. In the face of the general acceptance by Polish society of the Potsdam decisions with regard to the above-mentioned Western and Northern Lands, and the enforced silence with regard to the Eastern Borderlands, a vision of almost unimpaired prosperity was built up.<sup>1</sup>

Admittedly, that optimistic attitude was also shared by the Catholic Church, which perceptibly rejoiced with the whole of society in the materialization of so-called historic justice. The return to ancient Piast territories was perceived – not infrequently with pathos – as an indispensable component of the existence of the Polish nation and state. Ethnic transformations also played a significant role: the German population was replaced by Poles who had been forced to leave the Eastern Borderlands. This is how one should look at the general climate of the life of the whole Polish State, including the Catholic Church, in the years to come. An important element of this situation should be kept in mind, namely that Lower Silesia had become an integral part of the state, newly defined by the victorious coalition, which had full freedom in shaping the post-war order in Europe. On the other hand – that is, according to the vision of the Polish state – the situation was not as favourable. The new state found itself within the influence of the Soviet

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1 W. Roszkowski (Andrzej Albert), *Historia Polski 1914–1990* [*History of Poland 1914–1990*], Warszawa 1991; A. Paczkowski, *Pół wieku dziejów Polski 1939–1989* [*Half a century of the history of Poland*], Warszawa 1995; the following reflections on the European background of all post-war changes are worth recommending: J. Robert Wegs, R. Ladrech, *Europa po 1945 roku. Zarys historii* [*Europe after 1945. An outline of a history*], transl. R. Dymek, Warszawa 2008; this publication includes an extensive bibliography.

Union, and therefore in the orbit of Marxist ideology, which was the driving force behind the construction of a completely different ideological order in relation to centuries of tradition, and not only to the conditions immediately prior to World War II. This new order provided a vision of the introduction of a classless society, as realising the ideal of social justice; it also envisaged no place for religion and religious associations. It was clearly foreseeable that the initial marginalisation of the ecclesiastical sphere and the subsequent complete eradication of the religious sphere heralded no small number of clashes and conflicts for the future. Not everyone and not all at once perceived the process of complete elimination of the Church's influence, as these actions were cleverly programmed. Today, from the perspective of the past decades, the confrontational attitude – formed at the very beginning – of the state towards the Catholic Church can be seen more clearly.

The historiography of this aspect of the most recent history of the Catholic Church in Poland, and therefore also in Lower Silesia, has already made a fairly rich contribution. Above all, in relation to the pioneer period of interest to us here – that is the first ten years of the post-war experience of the Church present within a people's state – we have at our disposal an almost complete set of facts, while access to an ever-wider source base allows us to make syntheses of individual problems, forming complex planes of mutual relations. In the first place, research was done into the interrelation between the state and the nation, and further into the activity of the Church in creating conditions for a relatively normal pastoral ministry. The society of that time had a hard time grasping the real intentions of the state authorities with regard to the Catholic Church. The rather provisional conditions that had prevailed for quite a long period made difficult the task of gaining as accurate a picture as possible of social relations and moods. This time, marked and dominated by feelings of pathos which accompanied the rebuilding of the state and recovery of the old Polish territories, made up the basis for further research.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, it will be more difficult to make a balanced assessment: the transformations were viewed by the Church and the state authorities differently; the German circles, which did not accept the political and demographic changes and cherished hopes that the Polish administration of these territories was only

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2 The following publications are the most creative achievements; there is, however, abundant literature, especially in relation to local issues: A. Dudek, *Państwo i Kościół w Polsce 1945–1970* [*The State and the Church in Poland*], Kraków 1995; J. Siedlarz, *Kirche und Staat im kommunistischen Polen 1945–1989*, Paderborn–München–Wien–Zürich 1996; J. Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce (1945–1950)* [*The Church and the authorities in Poland 1945–1950*], Warszawa 1997; A. Dudek, R. Gryz, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce (1945–1989)* [*Communists and the Church in Poland (1945–1989)*], Kraków 2003; J. Żaryn, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944–1989)* [*A history of the Catholic Church in Poland (1944–1989)*], Warszawa 2003; Z. Zieliński, S. Bober, *Kościół w Polsce 1944–2007* [*The Church in Poland 1944–2007*], Poznań 2009. Another publication worth recommending is: P. Wójcik, *Il governo e la Chiesa in Polonia di fronte alla diplomazia vaticana (1945–1978)*, Verona 2016, p. 25–113.



provisional, contributed to the overall picture with their indiscriminate attacks levelled at the political and demographic changes.<sup>3</sup> The Holy See had its say too, all of which did not facilitate the calm development of a forward-looking regulation of all issues requiring patient consideration and shrewd prudence. It seemed that, if only because of these anticipated difficulties, there should be full cooperation between the Polish state authorities and the Church. More detailed research of this period was made possible by wider access to Church archives and by the establishment of the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [IPN]) on 19 January 1999, dedicated to investigating all crimes and of persecution directed against the Polish nation.

## 1. The new political and social situation in Poland and Lower Silesia after 1945

It is a truism to state that in Lower Silesia, as indeed in the whole territory allocated to Poland by the Potsdam treaty, the year 1945 was different in every respect from pre-war times. Not only because of the end of the tragic war and the damage that needed to be repaired, but above all because of the novelty of the situation. After many centuries, almost the whole of Silesia found itself within the Polish state, which began the process of shaping different social and political conditions and of imposing a new worldview. In all the conditions of the post-war problems, the Catholic Church was still an integral part of the rich and complex mosaic of the state and its society.

In order to understand the challenges that were faced in 1945, we need to consider the primary task of rebuilding the whole country from the ruins.<sup>4</sup> First of all, it was necessary to stabilise the general conditions connected with the takeover of these areas by the Polish authorities. They were preceded by Soviet military headquarters, since according to the Soviet definition of the provisional border of the Polish state along the line of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse of 10 February 1945, the Polish ad-

3 I have attempted a preliminary analysis of this compilation, see J. Kopiec, *Nowe elementy w historiografii diecezji wrocławskiej po 1945 roku* [New elements in the historiography of the Diocese of Wrocław after 1945], [in:] *Przełomy w historii. XVI Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich Wrocław 15–18 września 1999 roku. Pamiętniki* [Breakthroughs in History. 16<sup>th</sup> General Convention of Polish Historians, Wrocław 15–18 September 1999. Memoirs], vol. 3, part 1, ed. K. Ruchniewicz, J. Tyszkiewicz, W. Wrzesiński, Toruń 2001, p. 551–562.

4 The historiographical output for this aspect of history is already fairly extensive; for the purposes of this publication I drew on: E. Kaszuba, *Dzieje Śląska po 1945 roku* [A history of Silesia after 1945], [in:] M. Czaplinski, E. Kaszuba, G. Wąs, R. Żerelik, *Historia Śląska* [A history of Silesia], Wrocław 2002, p. 426–512; it includes a comprehensive bibliography of the issue.

ministration had only the powers of civil authority, and so Polish plenipotentiaries were appointed at the Soviet fronts. Already in the spring of 1945, significant groups of Polish people from the lost Eastern Borderlands began to arrive in Poland, which in Lower Silesia became widespread. Simultaneously with this wave, the efficient elimination of what was German was of particular concern, which was coupled with the attitude emanated from the exceptionally brutal behaviour of the Red Army soldiers in the lands of the former Reich. These experiences created an atmosphere of fear and far-reaching uncertainty. Suffice it to say that between January and March 1945, the victors carried out repressive measures on a large scale and put the people into actual slavery. This attitude can be illustrated by the fact of mass arrests of local men and their imprisonment in special camps on the basis of the Yalta Conference's consent to the USSR's use of forced labour of the German population as a form of repatriation; during this operation there was issued the order of 6 February 1945 to intern all Germans aged from 17 to 50.<sup>5</sup> In a straight line, this also led to the development of a detailed scheme for carrying out the resettlement of the German population from these areas, which – naturally – contributed to the escalation of conflicts between the German and Polish populations. The Russians actively intervened in these disputes, thus increasing national tensions and contributing to the undermining of many decisions made by the local Polish authorities. Added to this was the tense atmosphere surrounding the takeover of post-German property only through the intermediation of Soviet authorities. This state of affairs lasted quite a long time. Although the Polish authorities had been preparing to implement Polish rule in the Western and Northern Territories since the beginning of February 1945, the process was not without problems. In Lower Silesia, the difficulties were caused by prolonged warfare until the capitulation at the beginning of May, while Wrocław, the capital of a voivodeship that was also important on a national scale, experienced exceptionally fierce fighting. In a temporary administrative arrangement in the west of the country, part of Upper Lusatia (Zgorzelec, Lubań and Żary) was incorporated into the Lower Silesian Voivodship. In the east, the division line between the Wrocław and Silesia–Dąbrowa Voivodeships (from which the Opole Voivodeship was separated in 1950) coincided with the former German delineation between the Wrocław and Opole administrative regions. It was at this point in

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5 Ibid., p. 430–438; see J. Hytrek-Hryciuk, “Rosjanie nadchodzą!” *Ludność niemiecka a żołnierze Armii Radzieckiej (Czerwonej) na Dolnym Śląsku w latach 1945–1948* [“Russians are coming!” *The German population and the Soviet (Red) Army soldiers in Lower Silesia in the years 1945–1948*], Wrocław 2010; *Deportacje do Związku Sowieckiego z ziem polskich w latach 1944–1945. Perspektywa porównawcza* [Deportations to the Soviet Union from the Polish lands between 1944–1945. A comparison], ed. S. Rosenbaum, D. Węgrzyn, Katowice 2015, especially p. 123–156.

history that the long-term process of re-settling Silesia began.<sup>6</sup> The removal of the German population began towards the end of the war and from January 1945 mass escapes and evacuations took place in fear of the Soviet offensive; for example, the evacuation of Wrocław lasted until mid-February and involved around 700,000 inhabitants, mostly elderly people, women and children. The second stage took place after the end of hostilities, and it was marked by much brutality and numerous casualties. The third stage was connected with the decisions of the Potsdam Conference and its resolutions of 2 August 1945. From then on, organised and imposed displacements took place under the provisions of the Allied Control Council of 20 November 1945. According to its guidelines, the displaced persons were to be treated humanely, allowed only to take their personal belongings with food for the journey and they were to be ensured safety. However, the reality was different and complaints about the inhumane treatment of the displaced Germans multiplied.<sup>7</sup> This action continued until 1947.<sup>8</sup>

The relocated German population was replaced by an influx of Polish people to Silesia in waves: from the end of April 1945, organised transports started to arrive, first from central Poland and then transports of expatriates from the former eastern provinces of the Republic. The new inhabitants also included re-emigrants from France or Germany. A small number of autochthons remained. Integral to this action was the consistent expulsion of the German population and a long-term programme of the de-Germanisation of the native population. This had a significant impact on the creation of conditions for pastoral work among the new population of our region. This is a very complicated process, which is now largely known thanks to the great efforts of scholars, who make use of rich documentation.

In these population movements one should also notice a change in the religious composition of Lower Silesia. Without going into a broader discussion, the final result is that the predominantly Protestant inhabitants were replaced by Catholics, which gave Lower Silesia a completely different character, and was certainly a great help in the process of integrating these lands with the rest of Poland, which deserves

6 E. Kaszuba, *Dzieje Śląska po 1945 roku [A history of Silesia after 1945]*, p. 442–462; for more see J. Mandziuk, *Historia Kościoła katolickiego na Śląsku [A history of the Catholic Church in Silesia]*, vol. 4: *Czasy najnowsze [Recent history]*, part 1: *From 1945 to 1956*, Warszawa 2014, p. 21–42.

7 This part of post-war history has had a permanent impact on the dispute between the Polish and German sides; even the argument of the Polish side that the Germans suffered deserved punishment for their war crimes and that Poles had to leave their homeland in the east through no fault of their own, but on Stalin's express demand, was not sufficient for a consensus in the assessment of the conditions that existed after the war.

8 To illustrate this process, see the data: 834,693 persons of the German population expelled from Lower Silesia by districts in the period from 20 February to 30 September 1946: J. Mandziuk, *Historia Kościoła katolickiego na Śląsku [A history of the Catholic Church in Silesia]*, p. 26.

the euphemistic term of integrating the Western and Northern Lands with the Polish state, in which the Catholic Church had its fair share.

The state authorities then consistently prioritized the establishment of the new political system, always using all means of persuasion and enforcement to maintain law and order.<sup>9</sup> The first decade of the new order was conducive to the unleashing of social potential, as the slogan of rebuilding the state after the war's harsh experience was catchy and unquestionable. Admittedly, some people felt the temporariness and instability of the circumstances, some – especially those arriving from the Eastern Borderlands – felt distrust and entertained the hope of returning to their homeland, and yet there was no lack of enthusiasm for the efforts to bring the country up to a level of prosperity that matched the ambitions of the nation. The commitment and conviction of the rightness of such an attitude facilitated the takeover of the post-German economic and cultural heritage. This process was gaining momentum, fuelled by the reminiscences of the recent war and the fostering of feelings of resentment against the German people in general. In retrospect, it becomes apparent that for these reasons little respect was paid to the existing heritage, which was taken full advantage of and not always respected in relation to the remaining potential. Let us also mention at this point that certain priorities in the efforts to put the country in order were encouraged in the form of symbols, such as the reconstruction of the ruined cathedral of Wrocław on Ostrów Tumski or of historical buildings throughout Lower Silesia. A more favourable psychological climate began to prevail later, when the most extreme reminiscences about the post-German legacy had subsided.

## 2. The ministry of the Catholic Church in Poland in the years 1945–1956 in the conditions of the communist state

After the end of the war, the Catholic Church had to operate from the very beginning in a confrontational atmosphere created by a hostile state. There could not even be a minimum level of mutual cooperation. The decisions made by the government were arranged in a logical sequence of ever-tightening restrictions and efforts to bring the life of the whole nation, including the life of the Church, under strict control. The decree on land reform already issued on 6 September 1944, proclaiming the removal of capitalist social inequalities, became almost symbolic, heralding the dawn of a new era. The measures taken at that point were obviously limited to

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9 See J.F. Godlewski, *Kościół rzymskokatolicki w Polsce wobec sekularyzacji życia publicznego (1944–1974)* [*The Roman Catholic Church in Poland against secularisation of the public life (1944–1974)*], Warszawa 1978.

the areas already under the control of the so-called Lublin Government, i.e. before the final victory over the Reich, and it was only two years later, on 6 September 1946, that the implementing regulations on land parcelling were issued on the entire Polish territory. After the conclusion of the Potsdam Agreements and the consolidation of the new power, freedom of religion was officially guaranteed in the highest acts of the political system. This was already declared in the Manifesto of the Polish Committee of National Liberation, drafted and printed in Moscow on 20 July 1944. That document was the main pillar of the Provisional Government of National Unity, which was formed on 28 June 1945; this was further confirmed by the agreement of 14 April 1950 and, above all, Article 70 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland of 22 July 1952 with its clear declaration that freedom of conscience and religion would be guaranteed to the citizens, and all religious associations would be able to perform their religious functions freely. Alongside these official guarantees, however, the policy of the government that was completely dependent on the dictates of the Soviet Union – in the light of the documentation that has survived and the very intensive historical research that has been carried out – left no doubt about its real purposes. The Provisional Government of National Unity terminated the concordat with the Holy See on 12 September 1945, and already on 25 September of that year the Council of Ministers issued a decree on marriage law and Register Office records. A few days earlier, in order to gain time, on 19 September 1945, the government had announced that the property of religious denominations legally recognised in the former German territories was not post-German property but had an “owner”. As early as 27 December 1945, a decree was issued by the Ministry of Education, stating that only secular organisations were allowed in schools. From further restrictions, it is worth mentioning the regulation of the Minister of Treasury of 1 August 1949 on the obligation to keep a tax ledger, and on 5 August 1949 the Decree of the Council of Ministers on the protection of freedom of conscience was promulgated. At the same time, on the same day, the decree on associations gave the state authorities control over them. In the wake of these declarations, on 21 September 1950, the Council of Ministers promulgated a resolution on the takeover by the State of Church and religious hospitals, which included the establishment on 23 January 1950 of the compulsory state administration of the Church Caritas structure and the establishment a week later (30 January 1950) of the State Catholic Caritas Association. As if to complete all the previous restrictions, on 20 March 1950 a law was passed on the escheat by

the state of the mortmain.<sup>10</sup> All this offers irrefutable proof that the socialist state consistently strove to restrain and eliminate the Church from public life.

In the face of such a turn of events, it was necessary to react decisively. Such was the resolution of Stefan Wyszyński (1901–1981), the new Primate of Poland – appointed on 12 November 1948 – and the former Bishop of Lublin. He decided that, since the concordat could no longer be a line of defence, he initially directed his letter of protest to the highest state authorities. His letter to President Bolesław Bierut (1892–1956) from 16 February 1950 gives insight into the Primate’s reasoning. In Poland – he wrote – moving in two dimensions is becoming more and more evident: the meaning of euphemistically formulated arguments is obvious, while making use of them, especially by the attacking side of the state, can be completely incomprehensible at this point. As if in response to this letter, as early as on 27 February the government issued a statement accusing the Primate and the bishops of abusing their Church authority. This was accompanied by anti-church propaganda, often indiscriminate, and skilfully directed against Pope Pius XII and the Polish Episcopate, with the Primate at its head. Unrest was fomented and attacks hostile to the Holy See and to Pope Pius XII personally were directed. The Vatican’s decision to excommunicate people *ipso facto* for belonging to the Communist Party was very badly received: it was interpreted as an act hostile to the countries of people’s democracy. The Polish Government protested against this Vatican document on 29 July 1949. In order to avoid a continuous accumulation of tension caused by a lack of immediate answers or interventions – as the Primate thought – it was necessary to start regular and systematic talks with the government, most effectively within the framework of a joint Commission. The essential aim should be to lead to the establishment of a *modus vivendi* between both sides. The Primate subordinated all his efforts to this priority. And indeed, on 6 July 1949, on the initiative of the Primate, systematic talks between representatives of the Church and the government began within the framework of the constituted Mixed Commission. At the same time, however, it was noticeable that since the beginning of these talks there grew the number of decrees and regulations limiting the work of the Church. There was something – according to our present knowledge – incomprehensible in this double dealing: on the one hand, the Primate was looking for ways and means to guarantee a certain framework of freedom of action for the Church, while on the other hand, the government side kept talking and attacking.<sup>11</sup> This is how we should see the liquidation of the Church structure of Caritas in January 1950 and

10 The term was used to denote property that was not subject to inheritance or alienation: primarily church property, occasionally also secular institutions (e.g. hospitals, universities), from the acquisition of which the Church Fund was established.

11 At this point we can quote the words of the Primate, written during his internment in Rywałd near Lidzbark on 27 September 1953, i.e. the day after he was brought to the place of detention:

the related campaign to pressure the clergy not to read the dramatic Episcopate communiqué on the matter; the escheat of the mortmain being prepared in total secrecy, not to mention such facts as the arrest of the local Ordinary Kazimierz Kowalski (1896–1972) on 3 March 1950 in Pelplin. Meanwhile, on 2 March, the Episcopal Conference in Kraków considered in great detail the legitimacy of signing the agreement with the state. The text was ready on 3 April and signed on 14 April 1950 in the evening hours and announced in the press 2 days later.<sup>12</sup> All studies devoted to the history of the Church in the period of People's Poland have references to this *Agreement*. It should be emphasised that it only contained the minimum which could be negotiated under the circumstances of that time. The general idea was to define the Church's functioning in the reality of a socialist state; therefore, there were formulations of a declarative nature about the recognition of the nature of a socialist state, the direction of political and social transformations, especially the sentence in paragraph 6 about the clergy “not opposing the development of co-operatives in the countryside” and about counteracting the forces of “underground bands”. In fact, the state only guaranteed the preservation of those rights of the Church which stem from its very nature, e.g. the activities of associations, religious instruction, holy masses for children and schoolchildren, ministry in the army, hospitals and prisons, pilgrimages, and the activities of the Catholic University of Lublin. These guarantees were in fact systematically violated, which the immediate future clearly showed. Another issue was the normalisation of the situation of the Church in the so-called Recovered Territories.<sup>13</sup>

Nowadays we can see more and more clearly that the content of the *Agreement* was not an absolute good in itself; rather, it was a broad platform giving the Church

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“I wanted to achieve at all costs the creation of a permanent body of communication between the Episcopate and the Government, which later came into being in the form of the Mixed Commission. Since then, the Mixed Commission has been a permanent phenomenon in my work. The meetings are held quite often. Before each meeting, the bishops – members of the Commission – consult me; at the Commission they present the matters previously agreed upon. The meeting of the Commission is followed by a reporting conference, the minutes of which are drawn up as dictated. In this way, a huge portfolio of written minutes was created, providing ample material for the historian. With time, the Mixed Commission took on a special character and dealt with the text of the ‘Agreement’. We have been working on it systematically since July 1949, just a few months after I took over as head of Church affairs. We are not discouraged by anything, not even by the fact that the Government, as if disregarding the opinion of its representatives in the Mixed Commission, settles a whole series of matters without the knowledge of the Commission, which is simply surprised by the facts. We protest, but we do not stop the work we have started”, S. Wyszynski, *Pro memoria*, vol. 3: 1953–1956, comp. I. Czarcinska, A. Gałka, Warszawa 2018, p. 14.

12 See Z. Zieliński, S. Bober, *Kościół w Polsce [The Church in Poland]*, p. 72–76; for more details see J. Żaryn, *Kościół a władza w Polsce 1945–1950 [The Church and the authorities in Poland 1945–1950]*, p. 332–349.

13 This is dealt with in point 3 of *The Agreement*.



a tool protecting it from too far-reaching arbitrariness of the new authorities. At the same time, the Primate was not naïve: he grasped the situation, but persistently looked for ways out. Besides, clouds were gathering over the Church also in other countries of people's democracy.

At this point, I give the floor to the Primate himself, since this was his work, which, with the benefit of hindsight, we are able to place more and more accurately and correctly in a historical context. It is worth quoting a fragment of his reflections:

Why did I push to sign “The Agreement”? I was from the beginning and I am still of the opinion that Poland, and with it the Holy Church, lost too much blood during the Nazi occupation to be able to afford any further loss of blood now. This process of spiritual bleeding must be stopped at all possible costs, so that we can return to normal life, necessary for the development of the Nation and the Church, to ordinary life, so difficult to achieve in Poland. The Polish Church, after 150 years of bondage and mere existence, had only several years of freedom. The Nazi occupation was a terrible blow to the work that had barely begun. We were in such a period of catching up that we barely managed to prepare the forces for work. The seminaries had received young professors, theological faculties had only succeeded in recruiting scientific staff, the editorial offices of Catholic periodicals had only succeeded in training professional personnel, the Catholic publishing houses had only succeeded in creating technical equipment. Churches have barely been rebuilt and renovated, new parishes have begun to be established, and buildings for Catholic schools have been erected. The clergy, although they had visibly raised their level of work, were still working with old or borrowed models. Polish pastoral theology had not yet been developed. We were very young at every stage. In such a period of preparation for a creative leap, the war struck. The forces that had been prepared were destroyed, seminaries ceased their work, and priests were not ordained in many dioceses. And from the concentration camps and prisons came the daily grim news of the destruction of the clergy. We came out of the war so mutilated that we were barely able to live. It would be imprudent not to reckon with this situation [...] Surely God always has the right to require of us every sacrifice; the Polish clergy have already given proof that they are capable of responding to God's new demands, and they will not refuse to make sacrifices. Many of those priests who survived the Nazi camps found themselves back in prison. It was up to the Episcopal leadership to manage the affairs of the Church “in Polish reality” in such a way as to spare it new losses. The more so because we can expect that these are *initia dolorum*, that the whole development of social changes may lead to a conflict: Christianity – godlessness. In order for this conflict not to find us unprepared, it is necessary to gain time to strengthen so as to reinforce the forces for the defence of God's positions. That was the reality from the side of the Church; from the side of the Government of the People's Republic of Poland, it looked as if that Government, for reasons only implicit, wanted the “Agreement”. Certainly, it would have been much easier if it had not rescinded the



Concordat [...] We could distrust it; the Government, by its actions so far towards the Church, had authorised this distrust. This made the situation of the “Agreement” worse, since the distrust of the clergy and of Catholic society went hand in hand. However, experience taught us that the Church never said “no” where peace and agreement could be reached [...] During constant debates on the possibility of reaching some kind of settlement, I always remembered that it was not a settlement between the State and the Church because the Episcopate was not competent to conclude such a settlement. The so-called *causae maiores* are reserved for the Holy See. But here it was neither about a concordat, nor about agreements (*accordo*); this name surfaced at the last moment. It was only about the *modus vivendi* between the Episcopate and the Government. It seemed to me that laying down a few points of this *modus vivendi* was possible and necessary if the Church was not to face a new – perhaps accelerated and drastic in form – destruction. So, the “Agreement” would serve as a buffer, mitigating the growing conflict? Yes and no! What is at stake here is a whole way of thinking which stems from the spiritual formation of the person who takes responsibility. It may be imperfect, and then it will entail mistakes for which one day we will have to answer.<sup>14</sup>

I refer to this long quotation on purpose because it is necessary to look deeply into the intentions and arguments of Primate Stefan Wyszyński making certain decisions. In short, one must admit, that the Primate saw *The Agreement* as a process of empowerment of Polish society and the Church, and he simultaneously did not refrain from negative evaluations of it.

From the perspective of the past 70 years, we wonder all the more why the Primate had such confidence in this important opening up of contacts with the State, while the latter, without the slightest qualms, immediately set about unveiling its plans and objectives. Following the signing of *The Agreement*, on 19 April 1950 the Department for Religious Affairs was established, as a government unit coordinating all issues related to religious and church matters in the country; it received its statute on 27 April the same year.<sup>15</sup> The enumeration of unfriendly steps taken by the state authorities against the Church could take much space. Almost every case, without exception, was an opportunity for the government to harass the Church: the signing of the Stockholm Appeal (from April 1950 onwards) was such an opportunity. Then followed the consistent atheisation of schools through the establishment of a network of schools by the Society of Friends of Children (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Dzieci*) without the course in religion, the establishment of the Commission of

14 S. Wyszyński, *Pro memoria*, vol. 3, p. 15–16.

15 *Urząd do Spraw Wyznań. Struktury, działalność, ludzie* [Office for Religious Affairs. Structure, activity, people], ed. R. Łatka, vol. 1: *Struktury wojewódzkie i wybrane aspekty działalności* [Regional structures and selected aspects of activity], Warszawa 2020.

Catholic Intellectuals and Activists at the Polish Committee for the Defence of Peace (October–November 1950), the abolition of church holy days (18 January 1951) and, finally, an exceptionally skilfully aimed blow, namely the announcement of the liquidation of the so-called Temporary Status in regained Territories on 26 January 1951. As regards the latter, it was common knowledge that, as far as this matter was concerned, the Episcopate and the Primate themselves were exceptionally unanimous as to the indispensability of acting in accordance with the Polish *raison d'état*, but everything depended on conditions and requirements that were beyond the reach and competence of the Polish Episcopate. On the other hand, the game was about discrediting the Church and its hierarchy (which continued for a long time until its happy ending in June 1972).

These blows were accompanied by particularly vicious attacks on the clergy, arrests and detentions, accusations of collaboration with the occupying forces during the war and of favouring opponents of the regime after the war. A particular opportunity to attack was provided by the discussion around the draft of a new constitution. On 11 February 1952, the bishops sent *Catholic Constitutional Demands* to President Bolesław Bierut, as a response to the government's announcement of a new draft constitution. Seizure of church property, discrimination against religious orders, removal of nuns from hospitals, seizure of church publishing houses and printing houses, etc., completed the picture of the harassment of the Church. To top it all, the authorities always referred to the *Agreement*, arguing that the Episcopate and the Primate did not observe it. The announcement of Archbishop Stefan Wyszyński's cardinal nomination at the end of November 1952 became an opportunity for the state to show its disapproval and refuse to grant him a passport to attend the consistory; at the same time, arrests of bishops were made (Czesław Kaczmarek from Kielce, the Katowice bishops, trials in the Kraków Curia and the internment of Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak and Bishop Stanisław Rospond in Kraków) and show trials of clergy were carried out. Moreover, grand ceremonies were held with that part of the clergy which sided with the new regime. All this was aimed at tightening the noose around the Catholic Church. This policy was sealed with a decree issued on 9 February 1953 by the Council of State on "creating, filling and abolishing ecclesiastical positions in the Church", specifying that such actions required the prior consent of state authorities. It was reinforced by the threat that activities or support thereof contrary to the law and public order would result in removal from the ecclesiastical position, also at the demand of the state authorities. An additional constraint was the obligation that the occupation of ecclesiastical positions was to be connected with an oath of allegiance to the People's Republic of Poland. Thus, the state's programme, according to which bishops lost all influence over the appointment of priests to ecclesiastical positions and the possibility of free pastoral ministry, is clearly visible. This act made the college of the bishops speak out in a very dramatic form during the Episcopal Conference in Kraków occasioned

by the celebrations of the 700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the canonisation of St Stanislaus the Bishop and Martyr. The Memorandum of the Polish Episcopate to the Council of Ministers, entitled *Non possumus*, dated 8 May 1953,<sup>16</sup> began with the words: “After a long silence on the situation of the Catholic Church in Poland, the Episcopate voices its opinion at a particularly momentous time. At a time when the last voices of the Catholic press are falling silent, when an event has taken place that seems to close the period initiated by the Agreement between the Episcopate and the Polish Government concluded on 14 April 1950, and a new period, unevenly more difficult and complex, has opened, it is appropriate for us to depict the last three years of religious life in Poland”<sup>17</sup>

In the subsequent paragraphs there follows a bitter presentation of persecutions and blows, consistently aimed at the Church: removal of religion from schools and atheisation of the young generation, political pressure, attempts at and intellectual diversion among the clergy, ruthless destruction of the Catholic press and publications, interference in the affairs of the Church and attempts to restrain its activities (removal of imprimatur from Catholic publications, the obligation to register religious congregations, decree on the filling of ecclesiastical positions), the particularly unjust and harmful policy of the state towards the Church in the Western Territories. Then the efforts and attempts made by the Episcopate and the results of the experiences were listed, which made the hierarchy look with anxiety into the future and formulate the now famous summary with the declaration:

We will follow the voice of our apostolic vocation and of our priestly conscience, walking with inner peace and with the awareness that we have given no cause for persecution, that suffering becomes our lot not for anything else but only for the cause of Christ and Christ’s Church. We must not lay the things of God on the altars of Caesar. *Non possumus!*<sup>18</sup>

Practically speaking, by this act the Episcopate and personally Primate Stefan Wyszyński hastened their persecution at the hands of the government. The state authorities unleashed an unbelievable campaign of hatred, which was to cover, however, a certain awkwardness in internal politics, especially as already in 1953, the externally presented monolith of socialist societies began to loosen.

Events took a further, not easy course. One can note the death in prison on 13 May 1953 of Father Zygmunt Kaczyński, a social activist and editor of “Tygodnik

16 The full text of this memorandum of the Polish Episcopate to the Council of Ministers, entitled *Non possumus* [in:] P. Raina, *Kościół w PRL. Kościół katolicki a państwo w świetle dokumentów 1945–1989* [*The Church in the People’s Republic of Poland. The Catholic Church and its relations with the state in the 1945–1989 documents*], vol. 1: *Lata 1945–1959* [*Years 1945–1959*], Poznań 1994, p. 413–427.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 413.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 427.