

The political role of the Catholic Church in Poland under Martial

Law, 1981-1983

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Table of Contents

Abstract	1
Declaration	2
Acknowledgements	3
Abbreviations and translations	4
Map of Poland	5
Introduction	6
Chapter One: The Catholic Church, the Laity, and the Communist Regime	13
Chapter Two: Heroic Priests?	46
Chapter Three: The Higher Clergy	80
Conclusion	107
Bibliography	109

Abstract:

Most historians and political commentators agree that the Catholic Church was an important force in Communist Poland during the period of Martial Law between 1981 and 1983. However, they do not agree on the nature of its significance. Some have argued that the Church played the role of mediator between state authorities and society and thereby helped to stabilise the relationship between the two. Others have claimed that Polish Catholicism was itself a form of political opposition which helped to undermine the Communist regime. Despite its importance, relatively little has been written in English about the political role of the Polish Catholic Church under Martial Law. More has been written on this topic in Polish, but much of the Polish literature is hagiographical in nature. Therefore, this project explores various aspects of the political role of the Catholic Church and demonstrates that it was both a stabilising and a resistant force in Polish politics.

Declaration:

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Abbreviations and Translations:

Archiwum Akt Nowych - The Central Archives of Modern Records

IPN = Instytut Pamięci Narodowej - Institute of National Remembrance

Ministerstwo Spraw Wewnętrznych - Ministry of Internal Affairs

NKVD = *Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* - the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs

PZPR = *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* - the Polish United Workers' Party

SB = Służba Bezpieczeństwa - secret police

WRON = Wojskowa Rada Ocalenia Narodowego - Military Council of National Salvation

ZOMO = Zmotoryzowane Oddziały Milicji Obywatelskiej - Motorized Reserves of the Citizens' Militia

Map of Poland



Introduction

From the point of view of the Kremlin, Poland was the most problematic of the satellite states of East-Central Europe. Stalin himself famously described the attempt to introduce a Communist system into Poland as “trying to mould the saddle to the cow”.¹ It is true that countries in the region witnessed major protest movements against Communist domination, for example Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968. But in Poland there were significant protest events in 1956, 1968, 1970, 1976, 1980-1 and 1988. These events were more than just history; they were etched into the memories of the people because they “walked around in it every day”.² It was above all in Poland that Communism in East-Central Europe began to unravel in 1988/1989. According to Ella Odrowaz: “The first symbolic crack in the Berlin Wall appeared when the agreement was reached granting the Polish workers the right to form the first trade union independent of a communist regime behind the Iron Curtain.”³ With the round-table discussions of 1988-89, it was in Poland that the process of the disintegration of Communist rule in East-Central Europe began.⁴ According to Wiktor Osiatynski: “the roundtable negotiations played a crucial role in launching the ongoing process of change in Eastern Europe.”⁵

One possible reason for the stubbornness of Polish resistance to Communism was that, as Timothy Garton Ash has argued, “Polish national identity is historically defined in opposition to Russia”.⁶ Another factor that contributed to Poland’s resistance to Communism was the strength of Polish Catholicism.

¹ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-1982* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983), 5.

² Robert Darnton, *The Kiss of Lamourette: Reflections in Cultural History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1990), 25.

³ Ella Odrowaz, “Collapse of Communism Started in Poland” (8 November 2009) <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/content/view/24965/> (accessed 14 August 2011).

⁴ Rudolf I. Tökés, “Institution Building in Hungary: Analytical issues and Constitutional models, 1989-90,” in *The Roundtable Talks of 1989: The Genesis of Hungarian Democracy*, ed. Andras Bozóki (New York: Central European University Press, 2002), 113.

⁵ Wiktor Osiatynski, “The Roundtable Talks in Poland,” *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism* ed. Jon Elster (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1996), 21.

⁶ Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, 3.

Roughly 96.6% of Poles in 1946 were Catholic.⁷ The strength of the Church in Poland meant that, unlike in the “more secular Czechoslovakia or multidenomination Hungary, [the Church] served as a sturdy barrier to Sovietization.”⁸ In Poland, the Church was such a dominant force because “the Church was not only a religious institution but also a historic stronghold of Polishness in times of peril”.⁹

Polishness is not simply about being Catholic or a Polish nationalist. It is a concept that encompasses all the aspects of what it means to be Polish. Throughout Polish history, there were times where the state ceased to exist. Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński argued: “the state had shifted in form and occasionally ceased to exist altogether but throughout this the Church was united above all with the family and with the Nation.”¹⁰ Polishness has links to the family unit, the nation and the Church. It was Wyszyński who used the state/nation dichotomy to confirm his belief that, through the linkage between family, nation and the Church, “there have not been any significant breaks over the course of [Poland’s] history”.¹¹ In other words, he was reaffirming the continuity of Polishness through the centuries because of the strength of the bond between family, nation and Church. Polishness was something familiar and common which had opposed all the “alien authorities” that had been imposed on Poland by foreign powers.¹² The concept of Polishness will be revisited again in chapter one.

With the imposition of Martial Law on 13 December 1981, executive authority passed into the hands of the so-called “Military Council of National Salvation”

⁷ Norman Davies, *God’s Playground: A History of Poland* in two volumes, vol. II 1795 to the Present. Oxford: Clarendon, 1981: 223.

⁸ Pawel Machcewicz, *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956*, trans. Maya Latynsia (Washington, D.C: Woodrow Wilson Press, 2009), 14.

⁹ Machcewicz, 14.

¹⁰ Brian Porter-Szucs, *Faith and the Fatherland: Catholicism Modernity and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 345.

¹¹ Port-Szucs, 345.

¹² The Institute of National Remembrance, “Exhibit “Polish Peoples’ Republic (PPR): So Far Away, So Close...” (“PRL – tak daleko, tak blisko...” – Chicago, 24 September – 4 October, 2010” <http://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/2010/exhibit-polish-peoples-republic-ppr-so-far-away,-so-clo6> (accessed 12 May 2014).

(WRON). This body was made up of twenty-one senior figures from the Polish armed forces, the most important of whom was General Wojciech Jaruzelski. Its main role was to function as a principal decision maker for the duration of the state of war.¹³ WRON immediately issued decrees that suspended all existing unions and organisations, including and above all the free trade union movement, Solidarity. According to Richard Spielman it was this military regime that was finally able to implement “the repression necessary to destroy Solidarity”.¹⁴ All gatherings were barred except for church attendance. Telephones and telex machines were disconnected. Curfews were imposed and the military authorities made it clear to the population that any breaches of the conditions of Martial Law would be severely punished.¹⁵ On 16 December 1981, WRON instituted a systematic survey of all employees in state administration and a purge of Solidarity activists from public institutions.¹⁶

The Church’s immediate response to Martial Law was one of shock. As historian Mieczysław Biskupski wrote in his book, *The History of Poland*, “so overpowering was the initial show of force by WRON that even the new cardinal, Józef Archbishop Glemp, who replaced Wyszyński after his death in 1981, seemed overawed. He released a rather timid statement urging his countrymen to bow to overwhelming forces.”¹⁷ The Church was relatively unscathed by the Martial Law restrictions. Despite the crack-down on Solidarity, the regime was apparently keen to try and maintain good relations if possible with the Catholic Church. Church leaders were quick to call for calm and ask the people to abide by the rules that the state authorities had enforced to prevent unrest and violence.¹⁸

There are few historians who doubt the crucial importance of the Catholic Church in Poland. Louis Ortmayer, for example, called the Catholic Church an “important

¹³ Andrew A. Michta, *Red Eagle: The Army in Polish Politics, 1944-1988* (Hoover Press Publication, 1990), 132.

¹⁴ Richard Spielman, “Crisis in Poland,” *Foreign Policy*, no. 49 (Winter 1982-1983): 22.

¹⁵ Michta, 132.

¹⁶ Grzegorz Ekiert, *The State against Society: Political Crises and Their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996), 262.

¹⁷ Mieczysław B. Biskupski, *The History of Poland* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 167.

¹⁸ Biskupski, 168.

political factor in Polish events”.¹⁹ Jacqueline Hayden has argued that the Church in the 1980s wielded “enormous power”.²⁰ Elizabeth Valkenier has described the Church as a “powerful institution” in Communist Poland.²¹ Thomas Bird and Mieczyslaw Maneli argued shortly after the imposition of Martial Law: “There can be little doubt that without the direct involvement of the Polish Catholic Church and lacking the help of the Vatican’s experienced diplomacy, the democratic forces in Poland would find it impossible to navigate the rough seas of the contemporary political storm which affects so significantly the vital interests of the Soviet Union.”²² Hansjakob Stehle described the Church as “the guiding spiritual force of the nation”²³ but does not elaborate on the political significance of this fact.

Historians and political scientists, though they generally agree that the Church played an important role, do not agree, however, on what that role actually was. Some have described the Church as a mediating force between state and society and as a channel for dialogue between the Communist authorities and the Solidarity movement. Jacqueline Hayden, for instance, has argued that the PZPR (Polish United Workers Party) viewed the Church as a “go-between rather than dealmaker”.²⁴ Others, like Ortmayer, argued that the Church was a political actor in the struggle against communism.²⁵ He has even gone so far as to label the Church under Communism as a “political institution”.²⁶ Hansjakob Stehle, meanwhile, describes the role of the Church as a “conditioned dual role, motivated by nationalism and religion alike”.²⁷

¹⁹ Louis L. Ortmayer, “Accommodation or Illusion? Vatican Diplomacy in Eastern Europe, with special reference to Poland,” *Journal of Church and State*, 20 no. 2 (Spring 1978): 233.

²⁰ Jacqueline Hayden, *The Collapse of Communist Power in Poland: Misperceptions and unanticipated outcomes* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 123.

²¹ Elizabeth Valkenier, “The Catholic Church in Communist Poland, 1945-1955,” *The Review of Politics*, 18, no. 3 (July 1956): 305.

²² Thomas E. Bird and Mieczyslaw Maneli, “The New Turn In Church-State Relations In Poland,” *Journal of Church and State*, 24, no.1 (Winter 1982): 29.

²³ Hansjakob Stehle, “Church and Pope in the Polish Crisis,” *The World Today*, 38, no. 4 (April 1982): 139.

²⁴ Hayden, 124.

²⁵ Ortmayer, 233.

²⁶ Ortmayer, 233.

²⁷ Stehle, “Church and Pope,” 148.

Historians are divided in regards to how politically active the Church was in Poland. In very broad terms, historians can be divided into three camps: some depict the Church as an effective political actor; others describe the Church as politically ineffective; others again take a middle position between these two poles. For example, Suzanne Hruby and Jan de Weydenthal argue that the Church was seen as the only body that could defend civic and public rights.²⁸ On the other side, Hansjakob Stehle claims that the Church was ineffective. He wrote for instance that even the bishops' conference in 1983 believed that the papal visit had not been exploited to its fullest.²⁹ Those historians who argue a middle position include Adam Hetnal and Adam Bromke.³⁰ They claim that, while the Church was generally hostile to Communism, it was careful to ensure that it restrained any manifestations of radical opposition by the population.

In the existing historiography, most historians and political scientists have focused on the period of 1980-1981, i.e. the period between the strikes of August 1980 which resulted in the creation of Solidarity and the imposition of Martial Law in December 1981.³¹ Another period that has attracted the attention of scholars are the years 1988 to 1990, i.e. the period from the beginning of the round-table discussions between the regime and Solidarity to the final dissolution of Polish Communism and the election of Lech Wałęsa as president.³² A few historians have focused on the intervening years 1981-1988 and in particular on the period of Martial Law from December 1981 to July 1983. Those that have include, Andrzej Micewski, Anna & Andrzej Anusz and Jan Zaryn.³³ Yet these years are

²⁸ Suzanne Hruby, "The Church in Poland and its Political Influence," *Journal of International Affairs*, 36, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1982/1983): 328; Jan de Weydenthal et al., *The Polish Drama: 1980-1982* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1983), 263.

²⁹ Hansjakob Stehle, "Poland: Can the Church Point the Way?" *The World Today*, 41, no. 2 (February 1985): 42.

³⁰ Adam A. Hetnal, "The Polish Catholic Church in Pre- and Post-1989 Poland: An Evaluation," *East European Quarterly*, 32, no. 4 (Winter 1998); Adam Bromke, "Socialism with a Martial Face," *The World Today*, 38, no. 7/8 (July-August 1982).

³¹ Arista M. Cirtautas, *The Polish Solidarity Movement: Revolution, Democracy and Natural Rights* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); *The Polish Solidarity Movement in Retrospect: A Story of Failure Or Success?* ed. Dariusz Aleksandrowicz, Stephani Sonntag, Jan Wielgoh (Germany: Books on Demand, 2009).

³² Osiatynski.

³³ A. Micewski, *Kościół wobec "Solidarności" i stanu wojennego*, (Paris: Editions du Dialogue, 1987); A. & A. Anusz, *Samotnie wśród wiernych: Kościół wobec przemian politycznych w Polsce (1944-1994)* (Warszawa: Alfa, 1994); Jan Zaryn, *Kościół katolickiego w Polsce (1944-1989)*, 2003.

surely worthy of more study, for the survival of Solidarity underground, sustained by the continued spirit of resistance of the Polish population, were preconditions for the events of 1988-90.

It seems likely that a key factor that enabled Solidarity to survive underground, and which bolstered the morale of Poles during the dark years of Martial Law, was the Catholic Church. After December 1981, the Church was the one surviving legal institution in Poland that was not under direct Communist control. Furthermore, it was the Church that provided a space where dissent could be expressed.³⁴ Yet the precise nature of the political role of the Church during these years has attracted very little scholarly attention. One historian who does examine the “Resistance Church” is George Weigel but his discussion of the topic is relatively brief, only taking up eight pages in his book that comprises of 286 pages.³⁵ Therefore, this project will address these lacunae by focusing on the Catholic Church under Martial Law in order to explore the political role that it played during this period.

The over-arching question of this project is: What was the political role of the Catholic Church during the period of Martial Law? More specifically, the project will address the question of whether the Church was a stabilising force or an agent of resistance under Martial Law. In order to answer the over-arching question, I have set myself a number of sub-questions. By answering each of these questions I shall, hopefully, be in a position to address the over-arching question: What was the relationship of the Catholic Church with the Communist authorities? What role did faith and religion have in shaping political understanding and morale of lay Catholics during the period of Martial Law? What were the internal dynamics of Church politics? E.g. between the Catholic Church and the Vatican, between lower and higher ranking clergy, between moderates and radicals in the Church?

³⁴ Andrew West, “Churches as resisters and collaborators behind the Iron Curtain,” (5 November 2014) <http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/religionandethicsreport/churches-as-resisters-and-collaborators-behind-the-iron-curtain/5868806> (accessed 22 November 2014).

³⁵ George Weigel, *Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 147-155.

This thesis contributes to the literature by examining the political role of the Church in a variety of forms and at a range of levels. While it is perfectly legitimate to make generalisations, particularly for the purposes of historical analysis, it is also fruitful to look at the component parts of the Church and how they interacted both with each other and the outside world. To this end, I look in the first chapter of this thesis at the three-way relationship between the Catholic Church, the laity and the Communist regime. In the second chapter I focus on the lower clergy. The final chapter examines the role of the higher clergy in Poland during the period of Martial Law.

Chapter One: The Catholic Church, the Laity, and the Communist Regime

This chapter will explore the three-way relationship between the Catholic Church, the Communist regime and the laity under Martial Law in Poland. After a brief discussion of the historiography on the role of the Church in the collapse of Communism, the chapter will look in turn at protest and resistance, the politics of religious observance, and on the failure of Martial Law to stabilise the political situation in Poland. The main question that the chapter seeks to address is whether the Church was a stabilising or a resistant force in Polish politics during the period in question.

The debate about the fall of Communism and the role of the Church

The reasons for the collapse of Communism have been vigorously debated. Though many historians agree that the downfall of Communism had many causes, there is no agreement about their relative importance. Some historians have stressed the power of creative forms of popular protest.³⁶ Others have emphasized the importance of economic factors in undermining Soviet power.³⁷ Others again have called attention to the significant role of prominent individuals such as Ronald Reagan. Andrzej Brzeski, for example, claims that it was the arms race unleashed by Ronald Reagan that played a key role in the collapse of Communism.³⁸ The rapid build-up of American conventional and nuclear forces put the Kremlin in a situation where it had either to “match the new U.S. initiatives by significantly increasing military expenditure or to accede to U.S. superiority”.³⁹ For Andrew Busch, meanwhile, it was Reagan’s foreign policy that made it possible for western democracy to triumph over Communism. In Busch’s view, the Reagan administration developed an offensive complement to the policy of

³⁶ Padraic Kenney, *The Burdens of Freedom: Eastern Europe since 1989* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 5-7.

³⁷ Victor Sebestyen, *Revolution 1989: The Fall of The Soviet Empire* (Orion Publishing Group, 2009); Stephen White, *Communism and its Collapse* (Taylor & Francis, 2002); Janos Kornai, *The Socialist System: The Political Economy of Communism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

³⁸ Andrzej Brzeski, “The End of Communist Economics,” in *The Collapse of Communism*, ed. Lee Edwards (California: Hoover Institution Press Publication, 1999), 133-134.

³⁹ Brzeski, 134.

containment. This policy consisted of “attempting to roll back the periphery of the Soviet empire by assisting anti-Communist guerrillas in many of the countries that had recently fallen”.⁴⁰ This meant supporting covert operations aimed at overthrowing Soviet clients in Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Angola, and Cambodia, thereby draining the economic resources and sapping the political will of the USSR.⁴¹ According to Mark Riebling, Reagan has to share the glory of slaying Communism with another man – Pope John Paul II.⁴² In Riebling’s view: “when the Soviets faced these two leaders of shared purpose and conviction, they faced their worst-case scenario: a moral-political meta-power”.⁴³

Another individual whose role has been much discussed in the historiography is of course Mikhail Gorbachev. Some historians claim that it was he, rather than Reagan, who played the most important role in dismantling the Communist Bloc and ending the Cold War.⁴⁴ Jeffrey Gedmin, for instance, maintains that Gorbachev and his policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* caused the collapse of Communism by creating an atmosphere that “unnerved rigid, orthodox Communist leaders and encouraged bold political and economic experimentation by their reform-minded counterparts.”⁴⁵ John Gooding has argued that Gorbachev was the first successful revolutionary to come from what he described as a “revolution from within”.⁴⁶ For Gooding, Gorbachev was different to his predecessors in that he was reactive; he predicated his political policies upon social and cultural changes that had already taken place.⁴⁷ Jerry Hough argued that Gorbachev was engaged in a “very methodical and ruthless consolidation of

⁴⁰ Andrew E. Busch, “Ronald Regan and the Defeat of the Soviet Empire,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 27, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 457.

⁴¹ Busch, 457.

⁴² Mark Riebling, “Freedom’s Men: The Cold War team of Pope John Paul II and Ronald Reagan” (4 April 2005) <http://old.nationalreview.com/comment/riebling200504040753.asp> (accessed 15 July 2011).

⁴³ Riebling.

⁴⁴ Francis Fukuyama, “The Modernising Imperative: The USSR as an Ordinary Country,” in *The Strange Death of Soviet Communism: A Postscript*, ed. Nikolas K. Gvosdev (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2008), 9-20.

⁴⁵ Jeffrey Gedmin, *The Hidden Hand: Gorbachev and the Collapse of East Germany*, (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1992), 2.

⁴⁶ John Gooding, “Perestroika as Revolution from within: An Interpretation,” *Russian Review*, 51, no. 1 (January 1992): 37.

⁴⁷ Gooding, 42.

power”.⁴⁸ In Hough’s assessment, Gorbachev was “not the consummate democrat we had imagined”.⁴⁹ Despite their different assessments of the precise role of Gorbachev in the collapse of Communism, both Gooding and Hough agree that it was important.

Not all historians are so interested in the role of prominent individuals. They focus instead on structural factors. Many, like Jeffrey Kopstein, assert that it was the fundamental economic problems of Communist regimes that ultimately caused their downfall.⁵⁰ Michael Novak argues that two factors that led to the end of Communism were atheism’s effect on the soul and its impact on economic vitality. It was Communism that set out “to destroy the ‘human capital’ on which a free economy and a polity are based and in so doing sowed the seeds of its own destruction”.⁵¹ George Schopflin agrees that economic problems were a major factor in the downfall of Communism. According to Schopflin: “it is far easier to achieve a major transformation in the political sphere when the economy is reasonably prosperous than when it is collapsing.”⁵² But Schopflin also notes that the pressure to reform political and economic systems only becomes intense once those systems are in crisis, by which time it is much more difficult to resolve their underlying problems.

It is within this wider discussion about the fall of Communism that the debates about the political role of the Church are located. Was the Catholic Church, and by extension Pope John Paul II, instrumental in the downfall of Communism, at least in Poland and perhaps elsewhere? Long before the collapse of Communism in Poland, numerous historians and political scientists had noted the political importance of the Polish Catholic Church. In 1966, Frank Dinka referred to the Church as “the only organisation which could successfully compete with the

⁴⁸ Jerry F. Hough, “Gorbachev’s Endgame,” *World Policy Journal*, 7, no. 4 (Fall 1990): 639.

⁴⁹ Hough, 640.

⁵⁰ Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945-1989* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

⁵¹ Edwards, ed. *The Collapse of Communism*, (California: Hoover Institution Press Publication, 1999), xv.

⁵² George Schopflin, “The End of Communism in Eastern Europe,” *International Affairs*, 66, no. 1 (January 1990): 13.

regime”.⁵³ From this standpoint, the Church in Poland was crucial because of its ties to national identity. In 1988, William Avery argued that the “Poles tend to regard all attacks on the church as attacks on their sacred nation, causing believers and nonbelievers alike to flock to its defence.”⁵⁴ The Polish people, Avery claimed, revered the Church for its role in “preserving that nation during repeated assaults on the state”.⁵⁵ Leopold Unger put forward a similar argument when he claimed in 1983 that the chief discord in Poland was both spiritual and national in nature. According to Unger, “Polish communism is not and has never been Polish”,⁵⁶ whereas the Church was the main and practically invulnerable stronghold of Polish national identity. In the words of Gracjan Kraszewski, a Polish Pope leading the Church gave the laity immense strength and pride which helped them “put their faith into action”.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, Avery asserted that the Pope “enhanced the authority and prestige of the church, further cementing its historical bonds with the people”.⁵⁸ More recently, Kristi Evans has made much of the role of the Catholic Church in providing an alternative educational system, providing space and resources for the activities of the opposition, carrying on a discourse on human rights, morality and dignity as well as providing an alternative ideology that prevented the Communist government from imposing Marxism-Leninism on the consciousness of the population. Evans argues that the Church provided these functions even for non-Catholics because it was the only independent institution that still existed in Poland.⁵⁹ Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, meanwhile, have argued that the naming of Karol Wojtyła as Pope was “the greatest single boost to national morale since Polish independence in 1918”.⁶⁰ Wojtyła’s election, in their view, gave the Church

⁵³ Frank Dinka, “Sources of Conflict Between Church and State in Poland,” *Review of Politics*, 28, no. 3 (July 1966): 333.

⁵⁴ William P. Avery, “Political Legitimacy and Crisis in Poland,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 103, no. 1 (Spring 1988): 117.

⁵⁵ Avery, 115.

⁵⁶ Leopold Unger, “The People Versus the Party,” *The Wilson Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 (Spring 1983): 51.

⁵⁷ Gracjan Kraszewski, “Catalyst for Revolution Pope John Paul II’s 1979 Pilgrimage to Poland and Its Effects on Solidarity and the Fall of Communism,” *The Polish Review*, 57, no. 4 (2012): 35.

⁵⁸ Avery, 116.

⁵⁹ Kristi S. Evans, “The Argument of Images: Historical Representation in Solidarity Underground Postage, 1981-87,” *American Ethnologist*, 19, no. 4 (November 1992): 758.

⁶⁰ Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999), 205.

enormous prestige in its leadership of the people in their struggle with the Communist state.

By no means do all historians accept this heroic image of the Polish Catholic Church under Communism. Some historians have disputed the importance of the Church or even argued that the kind of revolution desired by the Church was not a liberal, humanist one. David Mason, for example, argued that the Catholic Church provided identity and solidarity but “the Church had little influence in the economic and political sphere”.⁶¹ Though the Church, like Solidarity, enjoyed the trust of the majority of the population, it “could not and would not play a more direct political role”.⁶² Hansjakob Stehle disputed the power of the Church and its impact on the course of events during the Martial Law period. According to Stehle, the Pope, during his second papal visit to Poland in 1983, attempted to heal the country’s social and emotional trauma. However, the visit did not have any real effect.⁶³ Despite the Pope’s visit, Solidarity remained illegal and Watesa did not regain his former status as negotiating partner with the state.

There are also some historians who discuss the fall of Communism in Poland but who say little or nothing about the role of the Church. For example, Marjorie Castle’s analysis of the signing of the round table agreement in 1988 makes little reference to the role of the Church in bringing about this key event.⁶⁴ According to Steven Saxonberg, the authorities were willing to negotiate with Solidarity in the period 1988-90, not because Solidarity was strong, but because they wanted and needed a negotiating partner to help stave off economic disaster through the introduction of reforms. Like Castle, Saxonberg does not really include the Church in his analysis of the political situation in Poland.⁶⁵ Other historians do

⁶¹ David S. Mason, “Solidarity as a New Social Movement,” *Political Science Quarterly*, 104, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 51.

⁶² David S. Mason, “Solidarity, the Regime and the Public,” *Soviet Studies*, 35, no. 4 (October 1983): 541.

⁶³ Hansjakob Stehle, “Poland: Can the Church Point the Way?” *The World Today*, 41, no. 2 (February 1985): 41.

⁶⁴ Marjorie Castle, *Triggering Communism's Collapse: Perceptions and Power in Poland's Transition*, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc. 2003), 2.

⁶⁵ Steven Saxonberg, *The Fall: A Comparative Study of the End of Communism in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary and Poland* (Oxon: Routledge, 2003), chapter 1.

discuss the role of the Church and of the Pope, and are willing to concede that both played a vital role, but their treatment of the topic is scant. Alicja Deck-Partyka, for example, argues that the Pope's support for Solidarity was a key reason for the collapse of the regime. Yet she devotes just over one page in her 380-page monograph to examining the relationship of the Pope and Solidarity. The rest of her book is devoted to the beginning of Poland – how it started, the nobility, war periods, its geography, government, economy, and culture.⁶⁶

The purpose of this chapter is to make a contribution to this discussion about the role of the Church by investigating in detail the three-way relationship between the Church, the Communist regime and the laity under Martial Law. This is an important exercise because most historians have focused their attention either on the period of KOR and Solidarity (1976-1981), or on the transition from Communism to democracy in Poland (1988-91). Much less has been written about the crucial period of Martial Law, during which the Communist regime attempted, but failed, to stabilise the political situation. What was the political role of the Church during this period? Was it a moderating force which helped to prevent open confrontation between the state and the people until a political process could begin again? Or was the Church a vehicle by which the Polish people continued their rebellion in another form? Examining the intricate relationships between the Church, the state and the people under Martial Law gives us the chance to understand the actions of the people and – possibly – to explain why the Communist system never recovered its footing after the crisis of 1980-81.

The Catholic Church, protest and resistance

The official and consistent position of the Church under Martial Law was that open confrontation between the state and the people would resolve none of Poland's problems but only make them worse. Accordingly, the Church repeatedly called for peaceful dialogue. The state should respect the rights of the people and abstain from using violence as a political weapon. But the Church

⁶⁶ Alicja Deck-Partyka, *Poland: A Unique Country & Its People* (Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2006).

was equally insistent that the Polish people should avoid violence at all costs. In countless sermons and texts, representatives of the Church called upon the people to remain calm and to avoid provoking the authorities.⁶⁷ For example, the Church in Warsaw was concerned that there might be violence during the celebrations of Liberation Day (9 May 1982). Just six days earlier, there had been widespread violence in Warsaw, Gdansk and elsewhere during the celebration of May Day.⁶⁸ The Communist regime was worried that, on Liberation Day, violence might break out again. The Liberation Day celebrations would therefore be tightly controlled by the regime, and only spectators with special passes could attend the most important ceremony in Warsaw's Victory Square. In this atmosphere of heightened tension, Primate Glemp issued a statement calling on Poles to stay indoors on 9 May and avoid trouble: "Do not turn out on the streets with stones – let no man hurl stones at another man."⁶⁹ In this instance, the laity seemed to have heeded the words of the Church. In other cases the Church intervened more directly to try to prevent open confrontation and violence. For instance, during strikes at the Zienowit and Piast mines at Tychy, a priest went into the mines and urged the strikers to go back to work.⁷⁰ When interned prisoners went on hunger strikes and youths started demonstrating, Primate Glemp quickly reprimanded their actions. Glemp said, "Love will overcome everything".⁷¹

It is noteworthy that many of the acts of public protest that took place under Martial Law eschewed violence and instead embraced exactly the sort of non-violent protest that the Church encouraged. During a strike at the Lenin Steelworks Plant in Kraków in December 1981, workers sang hymns and prayed in order to keep up their morale. A student directed the hymns and the singing could be heard throughout the entire plant. According to one participant in the strike: "While we were praying and singing there, strikers from divisions which

⁶⁷ Deck-Partyka.

⁶⁸ Roger Boyes, "Poles stay indoors on Liberation Day," *The Times*, 10 May 1982, 6.

⁶⁹ Boyes, "Poles stay indoors," 6.

⁷⁰ Robert Pear, "Regime to Ease the Curfew For Mass on Christmas Eve," *The New York Times*, 23 December 1981, A8.

⁷¹ Henry Kamm, "Freed Solidarity Leader Speaks Out in Poland," *The New York Times*, 24 May 1982, A1.

had already been pacified began to join us.⁷² In an act that was both defiant and conciliatory, the strikers also publicly prayed for the wellbeing of the ZOMO officers who had arrived to crush the strike, as well as the officers' families. According to some of the strikers and the eye-witness source, one ZOMO officer was so moved by this gesture that, when he removed his helmet, tears could be seen in his eyes. The other officers removed him from the hall.⁷³ In May 1982, citizens constructed a cross of flowers in Victory Square, Warsaw, on the very spot where Cardinal Wyszyński's coffin had rested before his funeral in 1981. Given Wyszyński's popular reputation as a fervent defender of the people's interests against the Communist regime, this was intended not just as an act of commemoration but of protest. The security forces attempted to prevent people from gathering and praying around the cross, for example by sluicing them with water cannons.⁷⁴ Yet, every time the cross was removed by the authorities, it was soon replaced by a new cross of flowers. Local florists even contributed to this non-violent protest by giving discounts on flowers that were bought to make the cross. The authorities were only able to bring an end to the protest by fencing off the entire area.⁷⁵

Another kind of protest that utilised religious symbolism was the construction of symbolic graves. In August 1982 in the city of Lublin, approximately 3,000 people gathered for the second anniversary of the Gdańsk Agreements. In an act that was perhaps designed to draw parallels between the current subordination of Poland to Soviet rule, and a previous period when Poland was invaded and occupied, the crowd laid a wreath of flowers at the plaque that commemorated the city's liberation from the Germans in 1944. From the point of view of the authorities, this was a highly provocative gesture because it implied an equivalence between Communist rule and German occupation. Police attacked the "demonstration", as a result of which a number of people were wounded. Next day, however, people returned to the spot and built a symbolic grave. A sign was

⁷² "Combating Martial Law," *World Affairs*, 145, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 90.

⁷³ "Combating Martial Law," 90.

⁷⁴ Kevin Ruane, *To Kill a Priest: The Murder of Father Popieluszko and the Fall of Communism* (London: Gibson Square Books Ltd. 2004), 63.

⁷⁵ Ruane, 63.

written in chalk on the ground next to a bloodstain that read: “perished from the hands of the people’s rule”. Placed on the grave were a bloodstained handkerchief, a small picture of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa, a red and white Solidarity pin, a small cross made of fish scales, and bunches of white and red flowers. In the words of anthropologist Longina Jakubowska, this grave conveyed “a political message through the idiom of religion, and the juxtaposition of martyrdom patriotism with oppression and violence against the people by the government, which claimed to rule on their behalf”.⁷⁶ The grave was thus a symbol of resistance in the only form that the laity had at their disposal. A similar incident occurred in a church in Warsaw in 1982. The people brought a small children’s wagon full of soil in which a cross had been planted. There were handcuffs hanging on the cross and there was red paint splattered on the dirt to symbolise blood.⁷⁷

There were also many instances of peaceful protest under Martial Law which did not overtly involve Christian symbolism, but which may in part have been influenced by the Church’s calls on the population to make their feelings known only through non-violent and non-confrontational methods. For instance, in May 1982 the inhabitants of Białystok, a town of 200,000 in eastern Poland, wanted to express their lack of faith in the official media, but to do so in a peaceful manner that the state could not interpret as a provocation. At 7.30 each evening, when the main television news programme was screened, people began to make their feelings clear by leaving their houses and apartments and “taking a stroll”.⁷⁸ It soon became common practice for people either to take a walk at 7.30 precisely, or to stand on their balconies or outside their doors and shake their rugs.⁷⁹ Eventually the citizens of Białystok stopped demonstrating in this way for fear that the police might intervene to prevent them.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Longina Jakubowska, “Political Drama in Poland: The Use of National Symbols” *Anthropology Today*, 6, no. 4 (August 1990): 11.

⁷⁷ Antoni Dudek and Krzysztof Madej, “Stan wojenny w Polsce. Stan badan” <http://ipn.gov.pl/publikacje/publikacje-internetowe/stan-wojenny-w-polsce.-stan-badan> (accessed 9 September 2013).

⁷⁸ Kamm, “Freed Solidarity,” A1.

⁷⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981- 22 VII 1983*, (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2006), 169.

⁸⁰ Kamm, “Freed Solidarity,” A1.

Despite the enormous moral prestige of the Church, its repeated calls for a peaceful resolution of Poland's problems were not always enough to restrain outbursts of popular anger and frustration.⁸¹ Many Poles were openly critical of the Church's cautious stance, which they regarded as too conciliatory. In particular, Primate Glemp was often criticised for not taking a stronger stance against the Communist regime. He was frequently compared unfavourably to his predecessor, Cardinal Wyszyński, who, it was believed, had represented the interests of the Polish people more vigorously.⁸²

In some instances, Poles openly defied, not just the authorities, but the Church's efforts to prevent conflict. While Glemp made calls for peace, radical Solidarity supporters tended "to ignore the prudent advice of the church".⁸³ In May 1982, for example, the officiating priest at an evening mass at the Cathedral of St. John in Warsaw was concerned that there might be a confrontation after the service between his congregation and ZOMO officers. The priest negotiated an agreement with the ZOMO that, in order to prevent any possibility of violence, worshippers would peacefully disperse to their homes. In return, ZOMO "reluctantly agreed" not to attack the congregation on the condition that they left the Cathedral in groups of no more than twenty people. However, rather than following the agreed procedure, the crowd soon reassembled in the streets outside the Cathedral and split into two cohorts. One group marched towards the New Market Place, picking up stones along the way, and soon became embroiled in a skirmish with the security forces. The other group headed down from the Old Town to banks of the Vistula.⁸⁴

The relationship between the laity and the Church was thus a complex one. As James Will, an American theologian, argued at the time, Polish people

⁸¹ Antoni Sulek, "Changes in the Life Values of Polish Youths: Study, Results, Observations, Speculation," *Youth and Society*, 17, no. 1 (September 1985): 19.

⁸² "Polish Archbishop Attacked for Failing to Take Strong Line," *The Globe and Mail*, 9 December 1982, 17.

⁸³ Jerzy J. Wiatr, "Mobilization of Non-Participants during the Political Crisis in Poland, 1980-1981," *International Political Science Review*, 5, no. 3 (1984): 238.

⁸⁴ Roger Boyes, "On my way home, a brush with ZOMO," *The Times*, 5 May 1982: 10.

“selectively form their attitudes in a ‘limited pluralistic culture’ as Catholics who practice more or less frequently but do not adhere unconditionally to doctrines or guidance from the church.”⁸⁵ Poles respected the Church. They listened to its pronouncements. They incorporated its iconography into their protests. They regarded the Catholic Church as the “mainstay for Solidarity followers”.⁸⁶ But they did not follow it unconditionally and were sometimes willing to ignore or disobey its advice.

On some occasions, as we have seen in the case of the St. John Cathedral in Warsaw, the laity used church services as a starting point for demonstrations. Under the conditions of Martial Law, the church was the one place where large numbers of people could assemble without being immediately attacked by the security forces. Unfortunately, such protests were usually crushed by ZOMO. In the city of Kraków on 13 May 1982, for example, a demonstration that started at a church service ended with 104 people being arrested and dozens of individuals being injured.⁸⁷

A further layer of complexity in the relationship between the Church and the laity was added by the fact that, at the same time as trying to restrain and channel resistance, the Church also bolstered public and private morale and sustained the will to resist the Communist regime. Nowhere was this more true than in the prisons and internment camps. It has been estimated that, by the end of December 1981, some 13,000 Poles had been arrested and 9,700 Solidarity activists were being held in internment camps.⁸⁸ One internee, Henryk Sporon, subsequently wrote a memoir in which he vividly describes his experiences in various camps and the role of religious faith in sustaining the prisoners. Not all the camps were the same but those in Jastrzębre-Szeroka, Úherce (in

⁸⁵ James Will, “Church and State in the Struggle for Human Rights in Poland,” *Journal of Law and Religion*, 2, no. 1 (1984): 160.

⁸⁶ Kamm, “Freed Solidarity,” A1.

⁸⁷ Adam Gliksman, *Solidarność Małopolska: Kalendarium 1980-2005*, (Kraków: Zarząd Regionu Małopolska NSZZ „Solidarność”, 2005), 83-84.

⁸⁸ Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski and Jonathan Weber, “Martial Law in the Collective Polish Memory following the Collapse of Communism,” *International Journal of Sociology*, 36, no. 4 (Winter 2006/2007): 47.

Breszczady), Rzeszów-Szeroka and Nowy Łupków (near the border with Czechoslovakia), allowed the clergy to perform mass every Sunday. The masses took place in halls where improvised altars had been set up, and internees were given the chance to speak to the clergy and go to confession. According to Sporon, mass was important to the internees and every Sunday service was well attended.

Not all the prisoners and internees were given access to the clergy. After being moved to another cell, Sporon learned that some of the prisoners had not been allowed to see Bishop Bednorz. His new cellmates told him that, previously, a priest had been allowed in to conduct a regular Sunday service, but this was no longer permitted. During the rest of the seven weeks that Sporon spent in the confinement cells, no further clergy were allowed to visit the prisoners. However, even when prisoners and internees were not allowed access to the clergy, religious faith and practice helped to sustain them. Sporon notes that praying was very important to internees during their time in the camps. The internees participated in both private and group prayers. Internees at the camp in Úherce prayed on the sixteenth of every month to commemorate those who had been killed in the “Wujek” massacre 1981. Miners in the Wujek mine in Silesia began strikes protesting Martial Law in December 1981. The force used to disperse the strike resulted in nine miners’ deaths.⁸⁹ The prayers took place during the internees’ afternoon walk and were led by a Polish linguist. The internees recited funeral prayers for the victims and their families. In the window of one of the camps’ buildings, internees hung out a sheet on which a cross had been painted with the word “Wujek” written across it. Next to the window, burning lamps were arranged into the shape of a cross. During day-to-day life, prayers were said twice daily during the week, in the morning and evening. Religious songs were also very important to the internees, especially during Christian holidays. A particular favourite was “The Black Madonna”, which was sung during common prayers. However, according to Sporon, the attendance at group prayers was

⁸⁹ “President marks 30th anniversary of brutal Wujek coal mine massacre” (16.12. 2011) <http://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/80613,President-marks-30th-anniversary-of-brutal-Wujek-coal-mine-massacre> (accessed November 2013).

“rather moderate”. Despite this, prayers and hymns were important to the interned prisoners as they lifted their spirits during a difficult time. In one instance, the clergy managed to get a radio to the internees, which they used to listen to the Pope’s sermons.⁹⁰ This is another example of the clergy providing comfort and hope for the interned.

In addition to providing moral support, the Church also gave the laity material comfort and assistance. This took many forms, including food, clothing or even shelter. The Church provided the internees with packages of food, which, according to Sporon, helped a great deal. Sporon writes: “it is difficult to imagine what the internees’ state of health would have been, since the prison food provisions were very poor”.⁹¹ Gastric complications were daily occurrences and Sporon also suffered from digestive pain when in the camp in Rzeszów. So, for Sporon, the role of the Church in providing material support was a blessing. The Church also provided material assistance to the families of internees, both directly and by distributing care packages that had been sent by donors in other countries. Paweł Brągoszewski remembers his experiences as a child during this period: “I remember help from other countries. Food packages with cheese, butter and sweets were available at local churches. I’d like to thank all of you who helped Polish people at that time. This is a deed not to be forgotten.”⁹² The Church also organised other kinds of assistance for those who were suffering. Journalists who lost their jobs with government papers or media were given jobs in Catholic newspapers.⁹³

Cultural activities arranged by or under the protection of the Church were also important in sustaining the morale of Polish people under Martial Law. Churches frequently allowed secular activities such as plays, exhibitions, and lectures to be held within church walls. Cultural activity flourished in churches because, for

⁹⁰ Jan Mur, *Dziennik Internowanego: (Grudzien 1981-Grudzien 1982)* (Paris: Instytut literacki, 1985), 54.

⁹¹ Henryk F. Sporon, *My internment during Martial Law in Poland 1981-1982* (Czeladź: Wydawn. Hejme, 2011), 35.

⁹² BBC. “On this Day, 13 December 1981: A ‘sad Christmas’ in Poland.” http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/witness/december/13/newsid_4524000/4524704.stm (accessed November 2013).

⁹³ Dudek and Madej, “Stan wojenny w Polsce. Stan badan.”

many artists, it was the only place where they were not forbidden to perform. Artists created works to help people cope psychologically with the situation but also to record the history of the people's experiences of Martial Law. Jacek Kaczmarski, for example, wrote a song, "Mury" (The Walls), which became a popular anthem and a symbol of resistance. Jan Pietrzak's song, "Żeby Polska Była Polską" (Let Poland be Poland), summed up Poland's historical struggle for independence over the last two centuries. Polish authors and poets took it upon themselves to write history in the absence of reliable historians, "recording arrests, searches, taking children of Solidarity activists to orphanages, torture, interrogations, killing of striking miners, internment prison camps".⁹⁴ A particularly noteworthy example of the cultural activities of the Church under Martial Law is furnished by church theatre. According to Kazimierz Braun, church theatre had its origins in the traditions of religious theatre that were popular in the Middle Ages, the Renaissance and Baroque Period. Some of those traditions continued through to modern times and were especially associated with major festivals such as Christmas and Easter. The Church supported and provided refuge for underground activities. Artists were invited by churches to use church premises to celebrate the election of a Polish Pope and his subsequent visits to Poland.

Parish churches as physical spaces also played a crucial role. They were not just used for religious purposes but had secular significance as well. The church building became a space that blended both religion and social aspects of life. The church was a place where social functions occurred. According to Konstanty Gebert: "it remains true that the churches and parishes ... became one of the main refuges of the non-political part of independent social activity".⁹⁵ The church as a building housed artistic exhibitions, theatre plays, and literary and journalistic soirees.⁹⁶ In some churches like those in Świdnik, they displayed their support for

⁹⁴ Barbara Sharratt, "Reflections of Martial Law in Polish literature of the 1980s," *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, (1991): 103.

⁹⁵ Konstanty Gebert, "An Independent Society: Poland Under Martial Law," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 15, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 365.

⁹⁶ Gebert, 366.

the Solidarity movement. The authorities had no power to stop people from showing their support; they simply took note of who was wearing the badges.⁹⁷

Parishioners often used their church to express their opinions and sentiments. For example, in April 1983 a Solidarity banner was hung up on the exterior of a church in Secemin.⁹⁸ In the evangelical church in Trzebnica, on 9 May 1982, a Solidarity banner was hung from the top of the building. It was so high and difficult to reach that the authorities needed to remove it with a helicopter.⁹⁹ In a church in the Rzeszów, during Easter in 1983, various scenes were created in the place where the nativity scene would normally be displayed. These scenes included mannequins wrapped in wire, showing the suffering of the people and a map of Poland surrounded by barbed wire.¹⁰⁰

In April 1983, Solidarity activists attended churches in Świdnik wearing flaps stamped with an “S” to show their support for Solidarity without wearing the Solidarity pin.¹⁰¹ Different methods of protest were found in different churches but many elements were repeated over and over again. These included the Polish map wrapped in wire, usually barbed wire, and the Solidarity banner displayed somewhere where everyone could see. In a church in Toruń in April 1983, leaflets were found there that said “Christ is risen, Solidarność too”.¹⁰² People often displayed leaflets like this or notices inside the church walls because they knew the authorities would not take them down. Church buildings were also used

⁹⁷ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

⁹⁸ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

⁹⁹ Informacja Dzienna nr 129/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 9 maja 1982 r, 9 May 1982. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹⁰⁰ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

¹⁰¹ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

¹⁰² z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

to stage hunger strikes. The first and best known took place in St. Martin Church in Warsaw in 1983.¹⁰³

Not only were images displayed within the church, but scenes were also erected outside close by the church. In the Wrocław Cathedral, in April 1983, a memorial to Katyń was created outside. It contained flowers and banners and people prayed beside it.¹⁰⁴ This openly public display was another sign of the resentment of the authorities and in particular, the Soviet Union. Katyń was a taboo subject since the Second World War and every kind of memorial was removed immediately. In some cases, the plaque or stone which read “Katyń 1940” was replaced with one that said “Katyń 1941”.¹⁰⁵

The importance of the changing of 1940 to 1941 resides in the history of the event. For over fifty years, the Soviets accused the Germans of being the perpetrators for the massacre in the Katyń forest. Approximately 22,000 Polish prisoners of war were killed after being taken from *Narodny Kommissariat Vnutrennikh Del* (NKVD, the People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs) gaols in the western regions of the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republics.¹⁰⁶ The Germans discovered the mass graves where the prisoners were buried in April 1943. Despite several commissions that established that the Soviets were the culprits, it was not until 1990 that the Soviets admitted their guilt. The changing of the date by the Polish to 1940, clearly blamed the Soviets who occupied that area until late in the summer of 1941.¹⁰⁷ Monuments that read “Gestapo, 1941” would have signs created that covered this data and had written “NKVD and 1940” over the top to highlight that it was the Soviets who were

¹⁰³ Hank Johnston, and Jozef Figa. “The Church and Political opposition: Comparative Perspectives on Mobilization against Authoritarian Regimes,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 27, no. 1 (March 1988): 36.

¹⁰⁴ Informacja dzienna nr 103/83: sytuncji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 kwietnia 1983, 12 April 1983, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2169_3.

¹⁰⁵ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: telekstwowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

¹⁰⁶ Anna M. Cienciala, Natalia S. Lebedeva, and Wojciech Materski, ed. *Katyn: A Crime Without Punishment*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 1.

¹⁰⁷ J. K. Zawodny, *Death in the Forest: The Story of the Katyn Forest Massacre* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 23.

responsible for the mass murder.¹⁰⁸ For the church to allow such a memorial, it gave the authorities and the Soviets a strong message. It showed that the lower clergy supported the people and were willing to give them opportunities to remember their fallen citizens.¹⁰⁹

A particularly important phenomenon were the “Weeks of Christian Culture” that were celebrated in churches. This movement had begun in Warsaw in 1975 and spread to Wrocław in 1977 and Kraków in 1980. By the 1980s, “Weeks of Christian Culture” took place throughout Poland. The purpose of these festivals was to create an alternative culture to that offered by the Communist regime, and to present works by artists and scholars who were not published by the state, not promoted by the media and those who were not permitted to teach. Events staged in churches during these weeks included lectures, meetings with writers and scholars, concerts by singers, exhibitions by painters, and productions by theatre artists. Because these events were held in churches, they avoided state censorship. Some members of the higher clergy actively supported the “Weeks of Christian Culture”. Cardinal Gulbinowicz and Cardinal Macharski were two examples of higher clergymen who supported these activities.

“Weeks of Christian Culture” continued to be celebrated under Martial Law and were important venues for symbolic resistance to the regime. On 15 December 1981, just two days after the imposition of Martial Law, the legendary actress Danuta Michałowska performed a one-woman show in the Church of St. Thomas in Kraków. During “Weeks of Christian Culture”, artists were invited to take active roles in services, for example by reciting poetry, particularly during a special service called the “Mass for the Motherland” that was held on the thirteenth of each month to mark the imposition of Martial Law. The police never raided churches during such events, but they did observe them closely to note the

¹⁰⁸ Cienciala et al, 249.

¹⁰⁹ Cienciala et al, 249.

identity of those who attended. Priests and artists who participated in events were sometimes later interrogated or persecuted.¹¹⁰

The politics of religious observance

The attitude of the state authorities to the Catholic Church was contradictory. The authorities disliked the hold of the Church on the hearts and minds of Polish people, but they also understood that they needed the Church to control unrest. Consequently, the regime's approach to the religious life of the Church was sometimes restrictive, sometimes conciliatory, and occasionally repressive. A good example of the tensions in the way that the state dealt with the Church comes from Christmas Eve, 1981. The Church approached the regime to ask it to lift the curfew so that people could attend the midnight mass. In a conciliatory gesture, the authorities agreed.¹¹¹ On the other hand, state television chose that night to screen Alfred Hitchcock's film *Rebecca* – the first western film to be shown on television since the imposition of Martial Law. Many Poles felt that this was a ploy by the Communists to persuade people to stay at home rather than attend Christmas services. Thus on Christmas Eve the state was simultaneously making it easier for people to attend a church service (by lifting the curfew) and encouraging them not to (by screening *Rebecca*). The authorities' tactic did not work and the churches were filled with people that night.¹¹²

As we have seen, clergy were often (but not always) allowed into prisons and internment camps to minister to the inmates, and sometimes internees were released as a way of trying to gain the trust of the Church.¹¹³ But the state also frequently harassed the Church or interfered in its activities. Church sources feared that the government was forcing a wedge between priests and the underground.¹¹⁴ There were feelings that some of the more ardent members were trying to end the Christian influence in the educational system. Zealots of the

¹¹⁰ Kazimierz Braun, "The Underground Theater in Poland under Martial Law during the Last Years of Communism (1981-1989)," *The Polish Review*, 38, no. 2 (1993): 167.

¹¹¹ Pear, A8.

¹¹² Thomas Swick, "Martial Law Journal," *Ploughshares*, 14, no. 4 (1988): 147.

¹¹³ Boyes, "On my way home", 10.

¹¹⁴ Roger Boyes, "Poles fear Church will be next in firing line," *The Times*, 8 March 1982, 4.

Party even took it upon themselves to rip down crucifixes from schools and factories in addition to sharply criticising priests.¹¹⁵ On the other hand, the authorities were generally careful to avoid interfering too heavily in religious events. In most cases, they only voiced their disapproval of events like pilgrimages. And when that was not enough, they would send the police or the ZOMO to control the events. The papal visit was one event that was heavily controlled and shall be examined in detail later in this chapter.

The attitude of the Church towards the regime was just as ambiguous as the state's attitude to the Catholic Church. The Church disapproved of Martial Law and was openly critical of it. On the other hand, the Church was chary of confrontation with the regime. An open breach between Church and state would further destabilise the political situation and increase the risk of widespread violence or even of Soviet intervention. If the relationship with the Communist state broke down, it might lead to the loss of all the privileges that the Catholic Church enjoyed in Communist Poland. The Church thus had many reasons to be cautious.

Even so, one vital function of Catholicism was preventing the Communist regime from establishing control over the public sphere. According to Scot Paltrow, the intense Catholicism of Polish people was not necessarily an indication of purely religious piety.¹¹⁶ In his opinion, since the late 18th century, Catholicism had fulfilled a political role in Poland. The loss of political sovereignty caused Polish Catholicism and nationalism to blend together. In Maryjane Osa's opinion this then led to the emergence of a "Polish civil religion". This meant that rituals and religious practices took on other roles such as serving as expressions of "Polishness" when schools and language were suppressed.¹¹⁷ Bogdan Szajkowski agrees that Catholicism in Poland became a kind of civil religion. For Szajkowski, the importance of the Catholicism in Poland could not simply be

¹¹⁵ Boyes, "Poles fear Church," 4.

¹¹⁶ Scot Paltrow, "Poland and the Pope: The Vatican's Relations with Poland, 1978 to the Present," *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 15, no. 1 (1986): 3.

¹¹⁷ Maryjane Osa, "Resistance, Persistence, and Change: the Transformation of the Catholic Church in Poland," *East European Politics and Societies*, 3 (1989): 276-277.

measured by empirical means such as regular church attendance. The civil religion of Polish Catholicism is religious because it gives an overall worldview and it expresses “people’s ultimate sense of worth, identity and destiny”.¹¹⁸ For Adam Hetnal, the religious faith of Polish people is closely related to their traditions and rituals. He argues: “Polish Catholicism is neither intellectual nor inquisitive but focuses on a strict observance of the prescribed rites (attending church services on a regular basis, praying, confessing, receiving Holy Communion, making pilgrimages to miraculous places, and so on).”¹¹⁹ Hence, when the regime threatened the fabric of Polish society by imposing curfews and disbanding organisations, the laity fought back by clinging to the Church, their faith, and holding fast to their religious traditions with all the more determination. As Zdzislawa Walaszek noted, the people sensed “their collective strength in the church and regrouped”.¹²⁰

The deep Polish tradition of investing the religious rituals and symbolism of the Catholic Church with political significance continued under Martial Law and was perhaps one of the most salient characteristics of the period. Church services and processions were imbued with anti-regime sentiments. For many Poles, attending mass was one of the only viable opportunities they had to express their disapproval of the Communist regime and of Martial Law. It was not just the faithful who attended services. Non-believers also flocked to the Church because they recognised it and looked to it in the absence of other legitimate organisations.¹²¹ In James Will’s opinion, the majority of Polish people worshipped regularly because “they identified themselves as belonging to a civilization grounded in Christian faith”.¹²² Churches would fill up with people attending mass and homilies. Some examples of the number of people attending

¹¹⁸ Bogdan Szajkowski, “The Catholic Church in Defense of Civil Society in Poland,” in *Poland After Solidarity: Social Movements versus the State*, ed. Bronislaw Misztal (New Brunswick: Transaction books, 1985): 74.

¹¹⁹ Adam A. Hetnal, “The Polish Catholic Church in Pre- and Post-1989 Poland: An Evaluation,” *East European Quarterly*, 32, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 513.

¹²⁰ Zdzislawa Walaszek, “An Open Issue of Legitimacy: The State and the Church in Poland,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 483, (January 1986): 132.

¹²¹ Szajkowski, 72.

¹²² Will, 159.

included, 3000 in the Church of Saint Jerzego on 16 May 1982,¹²³ 500 people in Saint Krzyża on 16 May 1982,¹²⁴ 6,000-7,000 people attending homilies in Wrocław on 11 May 1982,¹²⁵ 4,500 in the cathedral in Wrocław on 9 May 1982.¹²⁶ Professor Józef Życiński estimates that church attendance in Toruń, Wrocław and Kraków increased up to tenfold under Martial Law.¹²⁷ During the Martial Law period, the percentage of Catholics who regularly attended mass was unusually high. Brian Porter-Szucs has estimated that, between 1981 and 1983, the percentage of Polish Catholics attending mass rose from 53% to 55%.¹²⁸ In 1980 it had been approximately 50% and in 1989 it had fallen back to about 47%. Even members of Christian minorities, who made up less than 5% of the population, began to attend Catholic services in large numbers because “they were not indifferent to human rights and ideals of social justice, dignity and patterns of moral order”. Though they were not themselves Catholic, they saw the Catholic Church in Poland as “the best expression of their dreams of a new social order free of Marxist totalitarianism”.¹²⁹

The police kept a close eye on church services, for the authorities no less than the laity understood their political significance. Sometimes the police turned up to church services in order to keep track of attendance and identify those who participated in the service.¹³⁰ But they very rarely interfered with services. On one occasion, in Warsaw in February 1982, police agents dressed in civilian clothing were reported to have pushed their way to the front of the church in order to

¹²³ Informacja Dzienna nr 136/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 16 maja 1982 r, 16 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹²⁴ Informacja Dzienna nr 136/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 16 maja 1982 r, 16 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹²⁵ Informacja Dzienna nr 131/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 11 maja 1982 r, 11 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹²⁶ Informacja Dzienna nr 129/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 9 maja 1982 r, 9 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹²⁷ Józef Życiński, “The Role of Religious and Intellectual Elements in Overcoming Marxism in Poland,” *Studies in Soviet Thought*, 43, no. 2 (March 1992): 155.

¹²⁸ Brian Porter-Szucs, *Faith and the Fatherland: Catholicism Modernity and Poland* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 12.

¹²⁹ Życiński, 142.

¹³⁰ z zespołu akt Komitetu Krakowskiego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej z lat 1945-1990: teletekstowa informacja wewnątrz partya nr 79 z dnia 6.04.1983r.

swear at the congregation.¹³¹ In another incident in Warsaw, in May 1982, it was claimed that the police had shot tear gas into churches during services.¹³²

Pilgrimages and the veneration of icons were another aspect of religious life that gave lay Poles the chance symbolically to escape Communism and show their solidarity with each other and with the Church. Icons and symbols played a vital role in the lives of the laity. Indeed, the Church had an important institutional role and the use of religious images and icons highlighted those who were responsible for “defending or enhancing the freedom of the ‘fatherland’.”¹³³ The most famous and important icon in Polish history is the Black Madonna of Częstochowa. There are many myths and legends as to how the Black Madonna arrived in Poland. Myth suggests that she was moved from place to place as the boundaries of the state altered. But then the Black Madonna appeared to a Polish King and commanded him to place the icon on Jasna Góra in Częstochowa in 1382.¹³⁴ Miracles have also been linked with the Black Madonna. One occurred in the 17th century when the Swedish invaded Poland. The monastery with the Madonna withstood a six-week siege and the Swedish withdrew. This event was hailed as a miracle and from that moment, the Black Madonna was venerated as the “Queen of Poland”.¹³⁵ Shortly before his death in 1981, Cardinal Wyszyński had told the people that, while he would not always be there to speak for the people of Poland and their Church, the Black Madonna would never cease to provide comfort and protection. According to Wyszyński: “I may not [remain] but our Lady of Częstochowa always will be.”¹³⁶ In short, the Black Madonna, the “Queen of Poland”, was and remains an icon of exceptional significance in the hearts and lives of the people of Poland.

The Black Madonna continued to play an important role under Martial Law as a symbol of resistance and hope. Lech Wałęsa himself claims that he prayed to the

¹³¹ Roger Boyes, “Priest honours banned Polish students’ union,” *The Times*, 19 February 1982, 7.

¹³² Boyes, “On my way home”, 10.

¹³³ Evans, 758.

¹³⁴ Jakubowska, 11-12.

¹³⁵ Jakubowska, 12.

¹³⁶ Luxmoore and Babiuch, 188.

Black Madonna during one of his police interrogations. Afterwards, he felt that he had suddenly been given the strength to resist any interrogation.¹³⁷ Under Martial Law, claims Stefan Auer, “a paradigm of confrontation was created that turned any Christian celebration into a form of symbolic politics: a solidaristic nation (with a national historic and religious tradition of which the Black Madonna became the primary symbol and the Church its defender).”¹³⁸ Accordingly, under Martial Law, veneration of the Black Madonna became a highly political act of “passive protest”, and the Communist authorities did what they could to discourage it.¹³⁹ In one instance, “a copy of the icon of the Black Madonna circulated through villages ... but it sparked so much resistance that authorities placed the painting under house arrest.”¹⁴⁰ In Warsaw, many people wore a Madonna pin with a black stripe across it as a symbol of mourning for the plight of Poland and resistance to Communist rule.¹⁴¹ Arguing that this represented a misuse of Poland’s national colours, the authorities fined those who wore the Black Madonna pin 5,000 zlotys (\$60) – the equivalent of half the average monthly wage.¹⁴²

The Black Madonna is Poland’s most famous and venerated icon, but in Polish culture there is a deep tradition of bringing all kinds of religious symbols and images into everyday life. Visitors to Poland in the period just before the imposition of Martial Law often commented on the prominence of religious imagery in people’s homes. An Australian visitor to Poland, for example, visited the home of a peasant woman called Basia and was struck by a painting of the Virgin hanging on the wall, decorated with fairy lights.¹⁴³ Timothy Garton Ash described the home of Stanisław Krason, which he visited in 1980, in the following words:

¹³⁷ Timothy Garton Ash, “Under Western Eyes, Poland 1980-1982,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 (1984): 123.

¹³⁸ Stefan Auer, *Liberal Nationalism in Central Europe* (Taylor & Francis, 2004), 70.

¹³⁹ “The Newswalkers of Swidnik,” *Time*, 119, issue 23 (6/7/1982), 47.

¹⁴⁰ Jennie S. Knight, *Feminist Mysticism and Images of God: A Practical Theology* (Chalice press, 2011), 127.

¹⁴¹ Jakubowska, 13.

¹⁴² “The Newswalkers of Swidnik,” 47.

¹⁴³ Gloria Frydman, *Poles Apart* (Melbourne: River Seine Publications, 1984), 21.

There must be thirty at least in this tiny space: long reproductions 'The Last Supper' heavy varnished frames, pallid pre-Raphaelite Virgin Marys, and most of all, Popes. The Pope in Kraków, the Pope in Warsaw, the Pope with Włocławek in Rome, the Pope in black and white, the Pope in colour, the Pope in gouache, the Pope rampant on top of the television, the Pope couchant on the stove, the Pope suspended in a Perspex box on the wall and garland with plastic daises.¹⁴⁴

Shortly before the imposition of Martial Law, Garton Ash visited a hall that was being used by Solidarity. Within it, there was an altar, images of the Pope, the papal flag, the Black Madonna, and crosses. An image of Lenin had been removed from the wall and thrown out and replaced with a crucifix.¹⁴⁵ But why did Solidarity use religious symbols? Evans argues that there were a number of significant factors that gave authority to religious images in Solidarity iconography, such as philosophical heritage of romantic nationalism, the role of the Church as an independent institution, and a symbolic rejection of the Communist Party's commitment to atheism.¹⁴⁶ But what is of interest is that Evans summed up the religious images as being both political and religious. For Solidarity activists and supporters, religious imagery expressed "political conflict in religious and moral terms".¹⁴⁷

After the imposition of Martial Law, religious symbols and images became even more important to the laity. People used them to lift their spirits and draw parallels between stories from the Bible or the lives of the saints and the suffering of the Polish nation under Martial Law. Religious imagery was ubiquitous in both the private and public arena and it took on new meanings. For example, images of Jesus and of the cross were used as metaphors not just for the agony of Poland, but also as symbols of hope and defiance.¹⁴⁸ In the strikes and street demonstrations that occurred under Martial Law, the cross was almost always present in some form, and Poland was widely referred to as "the Jesus Christ of

¹⁴⁴ Timothy Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-1982* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1983) 119.

¹⁴⁵ Garton Ash, *The Polish Revolution*, 119-120.

¹⁴⁶ Evans, 757.

¹⁴⁷ Evans, 757.

¹⁴⁸ Evans, 757.

Nations".¹⁴⁹ Religious images were also important in the underground Solidarity movement. Indeed, according to John Kifner, the symbols used by Solidarity were overwhelmingly religious. For example, the underground printed stamps which bore religious images intended to enhance their moral authority.¹⁵⁰

Religious music was also of political significance both before and under Martial Law. Hymns and religious music were exceptionally important not just for the Solidarity movement but also for the laity as a whole. As we have already seen, interned prisoners frequently sang religious songs during special holidays and prayers. Similarly, workers would sing religious songs during strikes or occupations.¹⁵¹ Hymns gave the laity a sense of belonging and continuity, as the songs they sang were regarded as part of Polish history. It gave the people hope when they felt despair at their situation.¹⁵² For example, an American journalist was struck by the hymns that were sung during a pilgrimage held in May 1982. Miners and their sons, along with other men and boys went, on this annual men's pilgrimage to Piekary. The group carried crosses, banners and chanted hymns on the way.¹⁵³ The police avoided confrontation and made sure to channel motorists out of the path of the marchers. More than 100,000 people were present when Primate Glemp, Cardinal Macharski and a dozen other bishops made it to the top of the shrine. It was religious songs and hymns that united the people and gave them a common connection. These songs had always existed, even when Poland did not, and had always provided comfort to the people who remembered their words.

Pilgrimages were another form of devotional practice that took on political significance during the period of Martial Law. In the words of Matthew Brzezinski: "the pilgrimage, which has come to symbolize the role of the Roman Catholic

¹⁴⁹ Jakubowska, 12.

¹⁵⁰ John Kifner, "For Poland's Church, A New Relationship with the State," *The New York Times*, 14 November 1982.

¹⁵¹ Mark Miller, *Kto to wpuscil dziennikary* (Warsaw: Rosner I Wspolnicy, 2005).

¹⁵² "The Standoff in Victory Square," *Time*, (7/26/1982) 120, Issue 4, 35-36.

¹⁵³ Henry Kamm, "Church Rite in Polish Coal Region Becomes Cry against Army Rule," *The New York Times*, 31 May 1982, A1.

Church here, has historically been an act of defiance to suppressors.”¹⁵⁴ Józef Życinski, meanwhile, claims that pilgrimages created a “sense of community” and gave lay people a sense of the collective strength.¹⁵⁵ It was on pilgrimages that the laity felt the strongest solidarity and felt the strength of the Church. Two pilgrims who spoke to foreign journalist, Matthew Brzezinski, had interesting opinions about pilgrimages. While on pilgrimage, Krystina Strelczyk from Łódź, said to Brzezinski: “Poland would not be Poland if it were not for the church.”¹⁵⁶ Marek Kowalewski, a pilgrim, who was also there on that pilgrimage said: “It was our priest who told us we had to have the courage to fight against the Communists.”¹⁵⁷ These people continued to participate in pilgrimages even under Martial Law because of the influence and strength they received from the Church and the clergy.

The most significant pilgrimage during Martial Law took place in August in 1982 and celebrated the 600th anniversary of the arrival of the Black Madonna in Częstochowa. The Pope was hoping to attend the ceremony but unfortunately was denied permission by the Communist regime. He did, however, tell the Polish people that he would be there “with them in spirit”.¹⁵⁸ People of all ages, from young children to elderly women, participated in the pilgrimage. The mood of religious fervour was so powerful that it could even serve as a bridge between ordinary Polish people and personnel of the security forces. Policemen who were stationed along the pilgrimage route allowed the pilgrims to give them quick kisses, and they accepted the red and white roses that were handed to them. The officers smiled and waved at the 40,000 pilgrims who had started out from Warsaw.¹⁵⁹ Clearly, in this instance, there was a blurring of the line between the people and the state security apparatus. These policemen, whilst serving as representatives of the state, were also influenced by the patriotic-religious piety of

¹⁵⁴ Matthew Brzezinski, “Pilgrimage to Poland’s Holiest Shrine Losing It’s Political Role,” *The New York Times*, 30 August 1994.

¹⁵⁵ Życinski, 146.

¹⁵⁶ Brzezinski.

¹⁵⁷ Brzezinski.

¹⁵⁸ “John Paul in Poland ‘in spirit’,” *The New York Times*, 26 August 1982, A4.

¹⁵⁹ Serge Schmemmann, “Poles set off on pilgrimage with prayer and jubilation,” *The New York Times*, 7 August 1982.

the population as a whole. At the end of the pilgrimage, over 200,000 people marched through the streets of Częstochowa, singing hymns to the Madonna.¹⁶⁰

The papal visit in 1983 was particularly important in providing the laity the opportunity to articulate their anger at the regime. Since the authorities knew that this would be the case, the planning of the papal visit was a delicate matter. Indeed, the government was so concerned about the visit that they considered cancelling it altogether. The authorities could hardly forget what had happened during John Paul II's last visit in 1979, when millions of Poles had turned out to see him. The authorities feared that this might be repeated again. In the aftermath of the first visit, the Solidarity movement had emerged. Perhaps, in the aftermath of a second visit, there would be a renewed wave of protest. In two secret reports, the authorities highlighted some of their concerns regarding the Pope's visit.¹⁶¹ Firstly, the Pope's presence could reactivate Solidarity and also strengthen the position of the Church. Secondly, the Pope had "messianic ambitions" which could undermine the stability of the neighbouring countries in the Soviet Bloc.¹⁶² On the other hand, even though the visit would certainly create opportunities for the expression of anti-regime sentiments, banning it would expose the weakness of the regime and alienate the population even further.¹⁶³

After a good deal of hesitation, the regime eventually made the decision to allow the visit to go ahead. According to Grażyna Sikorska, who was part of a project for the monitoring of religion in Communist countries, the main reason the authorities decided to allow the visit was that cancelling it "would amount to a tacit acknowledgement of the irreversibility of the situation and greatly disappoint the people".¹⁶⁴ Due to the poor political and economic conditions in Poland, people had minimal confidence in the regime. If the Communists were to regain even a minimal level of public trust, they would have to give the people something they wanted. Since the regime lacked the resources to give the people any material

¹⁶⁰ "John Paul in Poland," A4.

¹⁶¹ Luxmoore and Babiuch, 248

¹⁶² Luxmoore and Babiuch, 248.

¹⁶³ Christopher Bobinski, "Polish Church Maneuvers in Subtle Game," *The Financial Times*, 20 January 1982, 2.

¹⁶⁴ Grażyna Sikorska, "The Church in Poland under Martial Law," *The Chronicle* (Summer 1982): 341.

relief, allowing the papal visit to go ahead was a relatively cheap way of giving the people something they wanted very badly. However, the authorities remained very nervous about the visit, and they insisted on closely managing the Pope's movements.¹⁶⁵ The regime imposed tight restrictions on where the Pope was allowed to go and how he was allowed to travel.

Interestingly, there were some in the higher echelons of the Catholic Church in Poland who also had reservations about the Pope's visit. Some bishops feared that the "unpredictable behaviour" of the Pope might complicate the delicate balancing act of the Polish Church between the regime and the people.¹⁶⁶ If the Pope's presence encouraged radical Solidarity supporters to engage in extremist acts, the Polish Church's "achievements" would be at risk.¹⁶⁷ There were also concerns from a Vatican confidant that the people would want the Pope to create a miracle in Poland during his visit, a miracle where his visit would trigger the end of Martial Law and then the collapse of Communism. If this did not occur, the Vatican confidently believed that the people's morale would drop significantly, and create a deeper state of gloom for the people.¹⁶⁸

The planning of the papal visit was accompanied by a flurry of negotiations between the regime and Church leaders. Gently trying to exploit the leverage that the Pope's visit gave them, they encouraged General Jaruzelski to lift Martial Law. According to the *Guardian* newspaper, Church leaders believed that ending Martial Law would create a better climate for the Pope's visit and reduce the risk that religious gatherings would turn into violent confrontations.¹⁶⁹ The Polish episcopate also appealed to Jaruzelski to mark the papal visit with an amnesty for the political prisoners.¹⁷⁰ The Church had hoped to make amnesty a condition of the visit but a pastoral letter read in Poland's churches confirmed that the Pope

¹⁶⁵ Informacja Dzienna nr 70/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 11 marca 1982 r, 11 March 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

¹⁶⁶ Luxmoore and Babiuch, 248.

¹⁶⁷ Luxmoore and Babiuch, 248.

¹⁶⁸ Kohan, John, et al., "Return of the Native," *Time*, 121, Issue 26 (27 June 1983).

¹⁶⁹ Eve-Ann Prentice, "Pope's visit home should mark end of martial law," *The Guardian*, 8 April 1983, 6.

¹⁷⁰ Informacja Dzienna nr 147/83, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 26 maja 1983 r, 26 May 1983. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2169_2.

would visit on 18 June. For reporter Hella Pick, the letter implied that the Church had given up the idea of making the visit conditional upon the granting of an amnesty.¹⁷¹ Western diplomats were also concerned with the papal visit. They feared that, without the relaxation of Martial Law, the papal visit could imply a de facto acceptance of what the Polish regime had done.¹⁷² This in turn would make it difficult for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to justify economic sanctions.

The Pope finally arrived in Poland on 16 June 1983 and remained in Poland for eight days. During his time in Poland, he visited the cities of Warsaw, Częstochowa, Poznań, Katowice, Wrocław, and Kraków. The Pope delivered sermons in the cities he visited, performed mass, and prayed for the people of Poland, particularly the widows of workers killed during the imposition of Martial Law. The authorities did what they could to discourage people from going to see the Pope. For example, in some schools, tests were scheduled for days that coincided with the Pope's visit, so that any pupil who skipped school to see the Pope would get lower grades.¹⁷³ But the regime's efforts proved futile. People flocked to see the Pope from all over the country, including those parts to which the Pope had been denied access.¹⁷⁴ A million people came out to see the Pope at a Warsaw Stadium and a million more joined the Pope at Częstochowa.¹⁷⁵ On the other hand, the regime could take some comfort in the fact that the Pope's public pronouncements on the situation in Poland were relatively restrained. He did cause the authorities some discomfort by openly defending Solidarity. The Pope also inserted veiled criticisms of Martial Law into his homilies. In one homily, which he delivered on 19 June in Częstochowa, he spoke about freedom. He said: "Here we were always free (...) here too we learnt the fundamental truth about the freedom of the nation, a nation perishes when a person wrongs his spirit, a nation grows when the spirit is cleansed and no external force is able to

¹⁷¹ Hella Pick, "Pope to visit Poland in June," *The Guardian*, 31 January 1983, 6.

¹⁷² Paul Lewis, "West Worried About a Papal Visit to Poland," *The New York Times*, 19 June 1982, 3.

¹⁷³ Informacje bieżące o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej w województwie miejskim krakowskim, 1981 r., sygn. 29/2382/450; dalekopis nr 651 z dnia 21 czerwca 1983r.

¹⁷⁴ Henry Kamm, "John Paul says Future of Poland Depends on Restoration of Trust," *The New York Times*, 22 June 1983, A1.

¹⁷⁵ Kohan et al.

destroy it.”¹⁷⁶ However, the government felt compensated by his references to the Polish character of Wrocław, which before 1945 had been the German city of Breslau.¹⁷⁷

From the point of view of ordinary Polish people, the Pope’s presence in Poland gave an opportunity to mix religious and political messages without the threat of punishment.¹⁷⁸ People frequently used indirect means to express their sentiments. As soon as it was confirmed that the Pope was coming, people started preparing. They decorated their homes and, in particular, created little altars in the windows of their houses and apartments. As well as the altars, flags with the victory sign and papal images were put on display.¹⁷⁹ Once the Pope had arrived, they had even more opportunity to articulate their political views in religious code. For example, many people in the crowds which greeted the Pope raised flowers and crosses in the air to symbolise the suffering that the nation had endured.¹⁸⁰ A good example of how people could blur the lines between the religious and the political is furnished by the banner which was spotted in the crowd at Warsaw’s Okęcie Airport in June 1983 which bore the words “Welcome Holy Father”. The message was innocuous enough, but the words were written in exactly the same font and red-and-white lettering of the Solidarity logo.¹⁸¹ Another banner read: “The priests are with us. The Pope is with us”¹⁸² – a statement which could be read in a variety of ways but which strongly implied “with us in our struggle against the regime”.¹⁸³ The Pope’s presence afforded people a certain sense of protection, which in turn encouraged some of them to be bolder with their banners. Slogans like “Hope-Solidarity” and “You Are the Real Father of Solidarity” referred more explicitly to the political situation in Poland.¹⁸⁴ Some

¹⁷⁶ Sławomir Kmiecik, “Pokój Tobie, Polsko, Ojczyzno moja,” (2013) http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/T/TH/THW/pk201324_pielgrzymka_jp2.html (accessed 23 November 2014).

¹⁷⁷ Kamm, “John Paul,” A1.

¹⁷⁸ Kohan et al.

¹⁷⁹ Informacje bieżące o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej w województwie miejskim krakowskim, 1981 r., sygn. 29/2382/450; dalekopis 572 z dnia 16 czerwca 1983r.

¹⁸⁰ Kohan et al.

¹⁸¹ Kohan et al.

¹⁸² Kohan et al.

¹⁸³ Kohan et al.

¹⁸⁴ Kohan et al.

banners even made openly political demands such as “No freedom without Solidarity”, “Freedom of Speech”, “We want truth.”¹⁸⁵

For the most part the visit passed off peacefully, and the vast majority of Poles heeded the Church’s pleas to remain calm and not to allow themselves to be provoked. But there were a few open confrontations. For instance, after a mass that the Pope gave in Wrocław on 21 June 1983, about 100 youths went out onto the streets carrying banners and shouting support for Solidarity. But the police quickly dispersed them with riot sticks and water cannons.¹⁸⁶ In Warsaw, the authorities erected barricades to channel the crowds. People decorated these barricades by placing flowers into the upright metal pipes.¹⁸⁷ They would not allow the authorities and their strict security measures to dampen their spirits and take away the joy from the visit.

The papal visit gave the laity a morale boost during a time where conditions had dampened spirits. The visits to Poland helped confirm to the people that “The Church is with us” which in turn played a role in sustaining hope of a positive turn in the Polish situation.¹⁸⁸ The visit reinvigorated by the “critical link between a Catholic leader and an overtly Catholic resistance movement”.¹⁸⁹ In George Weigel’s opinion, the papal visit “broke the fever of hopelessness that had set in with the ‘state of war’ just as the first visit in 1979 had broken the fever of fear that was the basis of control in the totalitarian state.”¹⁹⁰ In the opinion of Luxmoore and Babiuch, there was no single theme for the Pope’s second pilgrimage other than “maintaining the momentum of aspirations and reassuring Poles their struggle was not in vain”.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Kohan et al.

¹⁸⁶ Kamm, “John Paul,” A1.

¹⁸⁷ Kohan et al.

¹⁸⁸ Gebert, 366.

¹⁸⁹ Kraszewski, 43.

¹⁹⁰ George Weigel, *Final Revolution: The Resistance Church and the Collapse of Communism* (USA: Oxford University Press, 2003), 153.

¹⁹¹ Luxmoore and Babiuch, 249.

Conclusion

Overall, it is very likely that the Church was a stabilising force under Martial Law for two reasons. Firstly, the Church was as anxious as the state authorities to ensure that popular discontent did not lead to violence. As we have seen, the people did not always listen to the Church's frequent warnings about how important it was to avoid unnecessary violence. Nonetheless, the Church's moral authority was so great that it almost certainly restrained popular anger and channelled it into more peaceful courses. Secondly, even though the relationship between the Communist state and the Polish people had broken down almost completely, the Church kept talking to both. With Solidarity driven underground, the Church was the only mechanism through which a peaceful dialogue between the state and people could continue.

But the political role of the Church under Martial Law was complex and in some ways contradictory. At the same time as helping to stabilize the political situation, it sustained and, to a degree, encouraged popular resistance. The Church provided pockets of relative freedom where lay people could openly articulate their thoughts and share their feelings with others. Above all, the existence and strength of the Church meant that, even though Solidarity had been banned, the Polish people were able to express their solidarity with each other. This preserved the 'them and us' mentality which had generated the Solidarity movement in the first place. After previous episodes of mass unrest in Soviet Bloc countries, the Communist state always reimposed order by making people feel isolated and by breaking down the horizontal bonds of solidarity as an essential component of protest movements. Under Martial Law, however, the efforts of the Polish Communists to make Polish people feel isolated and alone failed miserably – primarily because the Church continued to provide an alternative civic sphere. Exhibitions, lectures, meetings and performances all offered an alternative to Communist civic culture. The safety provided by Church buildings meant that, even under Martial Law, Polish people could express anti-regime sentiments that would never have been tolerated in contemporary East Germany,

Czechoslovakia or Romania. Though priests rarely initiated these events, they supported them and allowed this alternative civic culture to thrive.

However this observation necessarily forces us to ask another question. There had been many previous episodes of mass unrest in Polish history, for example in 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976, all of which had been followed by periods of repression. What was different about the period of Martial Law? Why was the Church able to play such a key role in sustaining resistance more successfully in the period 1981-83 than during any previous period of repression? It is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty why Martial Law was different, but the most obvious and likely explanation is that John Paul II had altered the dynamics of the relationship between the Communist state, the Catholic Church and the Polish people. As was argued earlier, Karol Wojtyła's appointment to Pope had a profound moral impact on Poland. His election provided pride and strength to the people who felt oppression and despair at their situation. Pope John Paul II was a charismatic and engaging individual who knew how to reach the people. He exerted a powerful influence on people's imaginations, and in particular on the young. During his 1983 visit to Poland, students from Poznań slept overnight in a Dominican cloister before seeing him at the Royal Palace. They played their guitars and sang religious and folk songs before the Pope arrived. People living in the buildings close to where the Pope was conducting mass would decorate them with white and red Polish flags. In addition to these symbols, yellow and white papal pennants as well as portraits of the Pope and Black Madonna were carried around. In his very person, the Pope became a living symbol of Polish national pride and resistance.

In short, the Polish Catholic Church during the period of Martial Law was **both** a stabilising **and** a subversive force. That it was able to play this contradictory role so successfully was above all due to the impact of the man whose visit to Poland in 1979 had started the Polish people on their road to freedom.

Chapter Two: Heroic Priests?

This chapter will examine the role of the lower clergy during the period of Martial Law with particular emphasis on priests and on the many functions that were performed by priests in their communities. The literature on this topic is limited, and much of what does exist is hagiographical. If we are to believe this literature, priests under Martial Law were firm in their anti-Communist convictions, courageous in the expression of their views, and resolute in the leadership that they provided to their parishioners during a dark period of Polish history.

The main purpose of this chapter is to explore the heroic image of Polish priests that is found in the literature and to ascertain the degree to which it corresponded to reality. To this end, I shall first of all briefly review the relevant secondary literature and some of the most important primary sources. I shall then discuss three individual priests who were representative of the anti-Communist, patriotic ideal. Finally, I shall investigate whether the characteristics of these three priests were also to be found in the priesthood as a whole.

Primary and secondary sources on the priesthood under Martial Law

In studying the role of the Church under Martial Law, priests are important because they constituted the primary interface between the Church and the population. The priest was the key means by which the Church communicated with the laity. But this process worked the other way around as well. Parish priests had more direct and regular contact with ordinary people than any other members of the clergy. Priests therefore had immediate knowledge of the physical and psychological impact of Martial Law on the everyday lives of the people.

Despite the key role of priests in the relationship between the Church and the population, the literature on this topic is sparse, particularly in English. This means that the importance of priests and their actions have not been fully appreciated and examined. When some historians discuss the role of the Church,

they usually speak about it as if it were a monolithic entity. Little or no attempt is made to distinguish between lower and higher clergy, or between different factions or generations within the ranks of the lower clergy. There is very little in the scholarly literature on the lives and work of individual priests. The one obvious exception to the rule is Father Jerzy Popiełuszko, who has attracted much more attention. His exceptionality stems from Popiełuszko's popularity during his life, and his subsequent murder in 1984 by the Polish political police force, the *Stuzba Bezpieczeństwa* (SB). But, for the most part, the lower clergy is barely visible in the English-language literature.

There are some scholars who do not mention the lower clergy in their discussion of the Martial Law period. For instance, Timothy Garton Ash, in an article on events in Poland between 1980 and 1982, tells us little about Martial Law and nothing whatsoever about the lower clergy.¹⁹² Karol Borowski, in an article on the sociology of religion in Poland in the 1980s, noted that, after the suppression of Solidarity, "the Roman Catholic Church remained the only organized voice for the oppressed nation."¹⁹³ But Borowski makes no distinction between the various levels of the Church hierarchy and simply uses the generic phrase "the Church" to cover all members of the clergy. Similarly, Jacqueline Hayden and Hansjakob Stehle, in their discussions of the Martial Law period, do not mention priests at all.¹⁹⁴

There are some scholars who do mention the lower clergy under Martial Law, but only in passing. The point they usually make is that the moderate policy pursued by Glemp and other Church leaders was not uniformly popular with priests, some of whom were more forthright in their opposition to the Communist regime. For example, historian Adam Bromke's article on the situation in Poland, written in 1982, discusses the role of the Church but mentions the lower clergy in just one

¹⁹² Timothy Garton Ash, "Under Western Eyes, Poland 1980-1982," *The Washington Quarterly*, 7, no. 2 (1984): 126.

¹⁹³ Karol H. Borowski, "The Sociology of Religion in Modern Poland: A Critical Review," *Sociological Analysis*, 46, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 391.

¹⁹⁴ Hansjakob Stehle, "Poland: Can the Church Point the Way?" *The World Today*, 41, no. 2 (February 1985); Jacqueline Hayden, *The Collapse of Communist Power in Poland: Misperceptions and unanticipated outcomes* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006).

sentence. According to Bromke: "A few priests have been arrested for violating martial law regulations, but it has certainly not been a signal of a broader campaign against the Church."¹⁹⁵ Adam Hetnal, in an article devoted entirely to the Catholic Church, mentions the lower clergy only briefly. In Hetnal's view, there was a line of division in the Church which, "generally speaking, went along generational lines. Church leaders and older priests advocated circumspection, while the 'Young Turks' (including Father Popietuszko) openly challenged the regime during church services and otherwise. They overtly sided with the opposition to the regime."¹⁹⁶ Zdzislaw Walaszek also identified a generational cleavage in the ranks of the Church which complicated the relationship between the higher and lower clergy. According to Walaszek:

Many of the parishes are run by young priests, and there are signs that the decisions of those priests on how to run their parishes might not necessarily coincide with the overall policy of the episcopate. The radicalization of the younger ranks of the priesthood in expressing their disapproval of the regime in conjunction with the grass-roots social pressure might jeopardize the already fragile truce between Jaruzelski's regime and the Polish episcopate.¹⁹⁷

She acknowledges that priests had differing opinions to those higher up in the Church hierarchy. She does not explain how their opinions were different, or what made them radical, or how these priests expressed their disapproval.

Another example of a scholar who mentions priests but only in passing is Konstanty Gebert. In an article on Poland under Martial Law, published in 1990, Gebert wrote: "churches and parishes, often entering into conflict with superior church authorities, became one of the main refuges of the non-political part of independent social activity."¹⁹⁸ Like Walaszek, Gebert does not go into detail about how the churches became refuges, or what role was played by parish

¹⁹⁵ Adam Bromke, "Socialism with a Martial Face," *The World Today*, 38, no. 7/8 (July-August 1982): 270.

¹⁹⁶ Adam A. Hetnal, "The Polish Catholic Church in Pre- and Post-1989 Poland: An Evaluation," *East European Quarterly*, 32, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 509.

¹⁹⁷ Zdzislaw Walaszek, "An Open Issue of Legitimacy: The State and the Church in Poland," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 483, (January 1986): 134.

¹⁹⁸ Konstanty Gebert, "An Independent Society: Poland Under Martial Law," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, vol 15, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 365.

priests in this process. Further examples of this cursory treatment of the lower clergy in the English-language literature are furnished by Scott Paltrow and Susanne Hruby. In his article on the relationship between the Vatican and Poland, published in 1986, Paltrow devotes just three sentences to the tensions that existed between the higher and lower clergy. According to Paltrow:

Bishops and priests have criticised this position [i.e. the moderate position taken by the higher clergy], openly calling for a tougher stance by the Polish episcopate. So-called “radical priests” regularly preach pro-Solidarity, anti-government sermons and permit their churches to be used for clandestine opposition activities. Glemp has responded by acceding to government demands to censure these priests and by transferring several of those who did not comply with his instructions.¹⁹⁹

In a similar fashion, Susanne Hruby, in an article on the Church in Poland, noted that there were “faintly visible divisions within the church hierarchy and between the hierarchy and the local priests over the policy to be pursued by the church regarding martial law.”²⁰⁰ Unfortunately, comments such as these do not get us very far in terms of understanding the internal dynamics of the Polish Church under Martial Law. Neither Paltrow nor Hruby gives us any details about who these “radical priests” actually were, how many of them there were, or how many of the bishops agreed with them.

One book that deals with the lower clergy in slightly more detail is *The Polish Drama: 1980-1982* (1983) by Jan B. de Weydenthal, Bruce D. Porter and Kevin Pevlin. Though the book covers most of the Martial Law period, only four pages deal with the Church and the lower clergy. According to de Weydenthal et al., the majority of parish priests “had been directly and actively involved in the movements of public self-organisation and self-assertion during the period preceding martial law.”²⁰¹ Therefore, it was “hardly surprising” that, after December 1981, the majority of priests were hostile to Martial Law and sympathetic to Solidarity. Furthermore, in the opinion of de Weydenthal et al., the

¹⁹⁹ Scot Paltrow, “Poland and the Pope: The Vatican’s Relations with Poland, 1978 to the Present,” *Millennium – Journal of International Studies*, 15, no. 1 (1986): 20.

²⁰⁰ Suzanne Hruby, “The Church in Poland and its Political Influence,” *Journal of International Affairs*, 36, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1982/1983): 327.

²⁰¹ Jan de Weydenthal et al., *The Polish Drama: 1980-1982* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1983), 264-265.

priests were “largely influenced by their sensitivity to the feelings of ordinary people in their parishes”.²⁰² Though some bishops shared the feelings of parish priests, there was tension in the Church as a whole because the lower ranks of the clergy tended to be more radical than the higher ranks.²⁰³

Overall, the English-language literature that discusses the Martial Law period, and even the literature that focuses specifically on the Polish Church, tells us very little about the lower clergy. Priests are either not discussed at all or mentioned only cursorily. Occasionally the English-language literature gives us tantalising glimpses of what was going on behind the scenes, particularly in terms of the tension between radical younger priests and more moderate older priests and senior clergy. But we are given no details.

The secondary literature in Polish on the role played by priests during the period of Martial Law is a little more informative than the English-language literature. Stanisław Bogdanowicz and Krzysztof Wojcicki have written books about the Church in Gdańsk. Bogdanowicz’s text deals with the Church’s role in supporting opposition groups.²⁰⁴ He documented the ongoing struggle between the Communist regime and the Catholic Church. Wojcicki wrote a study about Father Hilarym Jastakiem, a parish priest, and his support of political internees.²⁰⁵ Andrzej Paczkowski’s 2006 monograph on Martial Law contains one chapter on the Church during the period in question. Paczkowski briefly discusses the role played by radical priests in leading the popular resistance to the Communist regime, and he gives us some specific examples of radical priests: Jerzy Popiełuszko, Henryk Jankowski (in Gdańsk), Mirosław Drzewiecki (Wrocław), Wacław Lewkowicz (in Białystok), o. Stefan Drzewiecki (in Łódź), Kazimierz Jancarz and Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski (in Nowa Huta).²⁰⁶ However, in essence Paczkowski’s treatment of the subject is not that different to that of anglophone

²⁰² de Weydenthal et al, 365.

²⁰³ Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe: Catholicism in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia*, trans. Alan Braley (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 43-44.

²⁰⁴ Stanisław Bogdanowicz, *Kościół Gdański pod rządami komunizmu 1945 – 1984*, (Gdańsk: 2000).

²⁰⁵ Krzysztof Wojcicki, *Rozmowy z księdzem Hilarym Jastakiem*, (Gdynia: 1999).

²⁰⁶ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981- 22 VII 1983*, (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2006), 221.

scholars. For the most part Paczkowski writes about “the Church” as if it were one, undifferentiated entity and he makes no systematic attempt to evaluate the views and the actions of the various layers of the Church hierarchy or of different factions within the Church.

Peter Raina has written two books that are directly relevant to this topic. In the first book, *Kościół w Polsce 1981-1984* (The Church in Poland 1981-1984), he focuses on the Church during the Martial Law period but does not really tell us much more than Paczkowski about the lower clergy. His treatment of priests is fragmentary. Priests are mentioned occasionally in his text but he provides no sustained analysis of the lower clergy.²⁰⁷ In his other book, by contrast, Raina examines the experiences of a specific priest, Father Henryk Jankowski, a parish priest in Gdańsk. In the text, Raina does examine Jankowski’s role in supporting opposition groups in Gdańsk during the Martial Law period.²⁰⁸ However, the text is a biography of Jankowski, which incorporates his correspondences and views on issues like anti-Semitism. So the text does not centre on the entirety on Martial Law.

One priest who is discussed a great deal in the Polish-language literature, as well as the English literature, is Father Popiełuszko. Jolanta Mysiakowska, for example, recently published an entire volume about the last two years of Popiełuszko’s life. The book, entitled *Aparat represji wobec księdza Jerzego Popiełuszki 1982-1984* (The Repression of Jerzy Popiełuszko by the Security Apparatus 1982-1984), is a collection of primary documents compiled by Jolanta and two other individuals, Jakub Gołębiewski and Anna Piekarska. 130 documents were selected that they felt illustrated the persecution of Popiełuszko by the Polish state. The documents include protocols and operational information. The IPN archives in Warsaw published this book in 2009 in connection with a commission designed to investigate crimes against the nation.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁷ Peter Raina, *Kościół w Polsce 1981-1984* (Londyn: „Veritas”, 1985).

²⁰⁸ Peter Raina, *Ksiądz Henryk Jankowski nie ma za co przepraszać* (Warszawa, 1995).

²⁰⁹ Jolanta Mysiakowska, *Aparat represji wobec księdza Jerzego Popiełuszki 1982-1984*. Tom I. (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2009).

There are some books in Polish that focus specifically on the priesthood, rather than on the Church as a whole or on the life and death of Popiełuszko. Most of these studies were written by priests. Two such texts are *Księża wobec bezpieczeństwa na przykładzie archidiecezji krakowskiej* (Priests and Security Relations in the Archdiocese of Kraków) published in 2007 by Father Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski and *Kościół w godzinie próby: 1945-1989 Nieznane dokumenty i świadectwa* (The Church in the Hour of Trial: 1945-1989 Unknown Documents and Certificates) published in 2006 by Tomasz Balon-Mrocza and Jarosław Szarek. Both these books discuss in detail the persecution of priests by the SB, and the careers of a few key priests who got into trouble with the regime. In *Księża wobec bezpieczeństwa*, Isakowicz-Zaleski looks in particular at three priests who were placed under investigation by the authorities on account of their anti-regime activities. However, part of Isakowicz-Zaleski's text deals with the period after 1983, and therefore falls outside the parameters of this thesis. Isakowicz-Zaleski also devotes a significant proportion of his text to discussing the higher clergy.²¹⁰ The book by Balon-Mrocza and Szarek consists of articles by various authors on the history of the Church in Poland, two of which deal with the experiences of priests under Martial Law.²¹¹

Though such texts are very useful, more studies of the lower clergy under Martial Law would be valuable. Moreover, those that do exist are mostly hagiographical in nature. A major theme of this genre is the suffering that was endured by the priests who were persecuted by the regime, and the fortitude that they demonstrated in adversity. By saying that the sources are hagiographical I do not wish to diminish what these priests experienced or achieved during the period of Martial Law. However, these texts do raise the issue of *typicality*. Were these priests exceptional, or can their experiences be seen as representative of the priesthood as a whole?

²¹⁰ Tadeusz Isakowicz-Zaleski, *Księża wobec bezpieczeństwa na przykładzie archidiecezji krakowskiej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Znak, 2007), 587.

²¹¹ Tomasz Balon-Mrocza, and Jarosław Szarek, *Kościół w godzinie próby: 1945-1989 Nieznane dokumenty i świadectwa* (Kraków: „Rafael”, 2006).

One important kind of primary source material are documents compiled into books. These books contain documents selected from various archives by historians or archivists. A typical volume of this type is *Kościół w stanie wojennym* (The Church under Martial Law).²¹² The text contains 83 documents produced by the *Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza* (PZPR - Polish United Workers' Party) about the clergy. Many of these documents discuss the lower clergy in passing but the relevant information we can glean from them is fragmentary. Another volume of this type is *The Church in Poland under Martial Law*.²¹³ This collection of documents was compiled by Solidarity in exile in 1983. Though it contains a number of documents that mention priests in passing, only two focus directly on the lower clergy.

Henryk Sporon's memoir, *My Internment during Martial Law in Poland 1981-1982*, occasionally discusses the activities of priests during the period of Martial Law. Though the lower clergy and priests are not Sporon's main concern, they do appear periodically in his descriptions of camp life. As we have already seen in the previous chapter on the laity, Sporon believed that the priests played a prominent role in maintaining morale.²¹⁴ They provided spiritual and material support in the form of church services, confession, food parcels, and by their physical presence in the camps.

Contemporary newspapers rarely discussed the activities of the lower clergy. Instead, they typically referred to "the clergy" or "the Church" without making any attempt to differentiate between different kinds of clergy or different levels of the Church hierarchy. For example, on 6 January 1982 *The New York Times* described how "a few clergymen"²¹⁵ read out a strong statement condemning Martial Law from their pulpits, despite the fact that Kazimierz Barcikowski, a

²¹² Tadeusz Krawczak, and Cyrian Wilanowski, *Kościół w stanie wojennym* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 2008).

²¹³ *The Church in Poland under Martial Law*, (London: NSZZ "Solidarnosc" Information Office, 1983).

²¹⁴ Henryk F. Sporon, *My internment during Martial Law in Poland 1981-1982* (Upper Silesia, Poland, 2011).

²¹⁵ "Church is Split on Crisis: Church in Poland is divided over Response to Military Regime," *The New York Times*, 6 January 1982, A1.

senior member of the Politburo, had convinced Glemp to withdraw the statement. But the text of the article gives no information about who these clergymen were, why they decided to go ahead with the reading of the statement, or how they came to that decision. On the rare occasions when newspapers discussed the activities of individual priests, they were rarely named. For example, on 20 January 1982, *The New York Times* printed an article about a priest who was arrested and put on trial for slandering the government and General Jaruzelski. However, the article does not reveal the name of the priest or give any other information about him.²¹⁶

Both the Polish state kept a close eye on the lower clergy for obvious reasons and produced documents in which they discussed the priesthood. These primary documents are at least partially available in the Polish archives but they are problematic because they were produced by an authoritarian regime with a strong ideological agenda. Nonetheless, they are useful in two ways. Firstly, documents produced by the PZPR about the lower clergy do at least give us an insight into the attitude of the Communists towards priests. Secondly, these documents often give useful factual information about priests and their activities. Such documents usually consist of the minutes of PZPR and other meetings in which the Church is discussed, as well as telexed information notes.

There are certain difficulties in terms of accessing relevant archival sources in Poland. The Polish Catholic Church archives are difficult to access (particularly by MA students visiting from Australia!). The state archives are more accessible than the Church archives. However, not all the material held by the state archives is accessible because of rules governing the availability of material that pertains to individuals who are still alive. The limited secondary sources prevent a deeper insight. Relevant primary sources are fragmentary or inaccessible. As a result of all these problems with the primary and secondary sources, all we can do is to try and make intelligent use of the fragments of information that we possess. All our conclusions, however, must remain provisional and rather speculative.

²¹⁶ "Around the World; Poland Arrests a Priest on Charges of Slander," *The New York Times*, 20 February 1982.

Turbulent priests

It is certainly true that some Catholic priests were resolutely opposed to Communism and Martial Law, and that they suffered because of it. Three such priests were Franciszek Blachnicki, Adolf Chojnacki and Jerzy Popiełuszko. All three of these priests were outspoken critics of the Communist regime. It is worth examining each of the three in turn in order to establish the criteria against which we can measure the behaviour and attitudes of the priesthood as a whole.

Franciszek Blachnicki

Father Blachnicki was born in 1921 in Rybnik, Poland, and died in 1987 in Carlsberg, Germany. In his early years, Blachnicki spent a great deal of time in Katowice. It was there that he became part of the secret Curia in Katowice during the displacement of the Silesian bishops between 1954 and 1956.²¹⁷ He played an active role in many initiatives and movements within the Church. In 1957, he started the Temperance Crusade, which involved nearly a thousand Catholic priests and over 100,000 lay people.²¹⁸ Such an organisation was not tolerated by the Communist authorities and was closed down. This led Blachnicki to write a memorandum criticising the persecution of the Catholic Church in Poland. In response, the authorities took severe measures against him. In 1961, Blachnicki was arrested on the charge of “spreading false news about the alleged persecution of the Church in Poland”.²¹⁹ He was sentenced to 13 months imprisonment with a three-year suspension. The years between 1964 and 1980 for Blachnicki were filled with activity regarding the implementation of the decisions taken by the Second Vatican Council.²²⁰ At the time of the imposition of Martial Law, Blachnicki was in Rome and the authorities issued a warrant for his arrest.²²¹ Unable to return to Poland, Blachnicki moved to Carlsberg, Germany. In effect, he was exiled from his homeland but this did not deter him from voicing his

²¹⁷ “Ks. Franciszek Blachnicki,” <http://www.blachnicki.oaza.org.pl/> (accessed February 2013).

²¹⁸ “Ks. Blachnicki.”

²¹⁹ “Ks. Blachnicki.”

²²⁰ Krawczak, and Wilanowski, 304.

²²¹ “Ks. Blachnicki.”

concerns or continuing with his work. In Germany, he founded the International Centre for the Evangelization of Light and Life and the Christian Liberation Nations Service.²²² The Light-Life movement has its roots in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Blachnicki believed that the renewal of the Church would begin at the level of the individual parish, which needed to become a living and vibrant community of faith. Not only would the revitalisation of the parish bring people into active Church membership, but it would also provide scope for mature Christians who want to serve the Church and their neighbours. The Christian Liberation Nations Service was created to help Christians in Eastern European countries that were struggling for liberation from totalitarianism. As we shall see, Blachnicki was a fervent opponent of Communism, so it is not surprising that the Christian Liberation Nations Service was close to his heart.

Blachnicki was thus a prominent individual in the Church and cannot be regarded as a typical parish priest. However, given the limited nature of the available primary sources, we can use Blachnicki for clues about the attitudes of priests – and in particular of anti-Communist priests – to the Communist regime. Blachnicki had just left Poland so he was familiar with the situation in the country. His active involvement in various civic initiatives of the Church meant that he had plenty of contact with other priests who may have shared Blachnicki's opinions. It would, of course, be dangerous to assume that Blachnicki's views were representative. But he is a relevant witness whose voice is worth listening to because he had recently left Poland and, unlike priests who were still in Poland, was able to speak openly about his opinions.

During his German exile, Blachnicki wrote a 15-page essay in which he articulated his thoughts on the role of the Church in the Polish Crisis. This essay, which can be found in the State Archives in Kraków, is entitled *Rola Kościoła w Kryzysie Polski Pojattańskiej* (The Role of the Church in Poland's post-Yalta's Crisis). While it is difficult to determine how the essay arrived in Poland, it is likely that it was smuggled into Poland and that a copy was seized by the police.

²²² Krawczak and Wilanowski, 304.

In the essay, Blachnicki expresses his total rejection of the Communist system. In his opinion, Communism was based on lies. He argued that *Pravda*, the flagship newspaper of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, was the worst lie in creation and that fear and oppression were the Kremlin's greatest weapons.²²³ According to Blachnicki, propaganda was another key aspect of the Communist system. The Communists used propaganda to try to convince the people that life was good and that everything in society was as it should be. The Communists also restricted access to higher education, and placed limits on the intellectual freedom of those who were admitted to universities, in order to prevent people from thinking for themselves. Blachnicki saw nothing good in Communism but regarded it as a system based purely on fear and oppression.

Blachnicki did not see Communism as a home-grown evil. It had been imposed on Poland by the Soviets, and the PZPR was the puppet of the Kremlin. All power in the Communist system emanated from the Kremlin but was then distributed to the ruling elites in the satellite states of the Soviet Bloc.²²⁴ But the main tool for the exercise of the Kremlin's authority in Poland was not the PZPR but the political police. It was the role of the SB to spread fear and to eliminate any threat to the Communist system.²²⁵ The SB was so powerful that it could even replace party members if they were not following orders directly from Moscow.²²⁶ The SB was directly answerable to Moscow and Poland was thus a police state.

Blachnicki further argued in his essay that the Communist authorities in Poland were fundamentally hostile to the Catholic Church. They did not want it to exist and their long-term goal was to eliminate it completely. But the Communists knew that the Church was deeply embedded in the hearts of the people. The authorities were not strong enough to replace the Church even with the imposition of Martial Law. Though the Communists claimed that the Church and Communism could

²²³ Informacje dotyczące działalności Kościoła rzymsko-katolickiego w Polsce, 1978-1979, 1982 r.-sygn. 29/2382/399. Ks. Prof. Franciszek Blachnicki. "Rola Kościoła w Krzysie Polski Pojałtańskiej" część I. Warszawa, grudzień 1982, 7-8.

²²⁴ Blachnicki, "Rola Kościoła," cz. 1, 1.

²²⁵ Blachnicki, "Rola Kościoła," cz. 1, 3.

²²⁶ Blachnicki, "Rola Kościoła," cz. 1, 3.

co-exist, they did so purely in order to persuade Catholics to remain passive while the Communists set about undermining the Catholic Church. The authorities realised that they could not remove the Church overnight and they needed to lull Catholics into passivity until they were strong enough to get rid of the Church altogether.

In Blachnicki's view, the Communists used three main tactics against the Church in Poland, the first of which was to contain the Church. The authorities attempted to do this by placing restrictions on the activities of the Church in the civic life of Poland. The authorities wanted to deprive the Church of any influence on voluntary associations, schools, civic institutions, charitable organisations and cultural life.²²⁷ As far as possible, the Communists wanted to restrict the Church to the purely religious sphere and ensure that it had little or no influence on secular life.

According to Blachnicki, the Communists not only set out to contain the Church, they also sought to tame it. The authorities wanted to make the Church dependent on the Communist system. Appointments to high-ranking positions within the Polish Church had to be approved by the authorities before the Church could implement them. It was important for the authorities to maintain the illusion that it was possible for the Church and Communism to live alongside each other. The authorities also tried to persuade the Church to be grateful to them for allowing it certain rights and privileges within the Communist system.

The third Communist tactic, in Blachnicki's view, was to undermine the Church by pulling people away from its influence. The Communists sought to chip away at the Church through the use of propaganda and education. The people depended on the Church so the authorities wanted to transfer that dependency onto the Communist system. The authorities claimed that their tolerance of the Catholic Church was proof of the fact that they respected the people's freedom of conscience.²²⁸ In return, the state had the right to demand the loyalty both of the

²²⁷ Blachnicki, "Rola Kosciola," cz. 1, 11.

²²⁸ Blachnicki, "Rola Kosciola," cz. 1.

Church and of the Polish people as a whole.²²⁹ Therefore, in Blachnicki's view, the Communist state was playing a confidence trick on the Polish people. The state aimed to pacify the people by pretending to be willing to tolerate the Church while making the people psychologically dependent on the Party. This dependency would make the people more susceptible to Communist propaganda and, in the long term, erode the foundations of Catholicism, in particular among the young people. As a result, Blachnicki concluded, people needed to understand the true nature of the struggle between Communism and Catholicism. The totalitarian nature of Communism meant that co-existence between the two groups, in the long term, was impossible.

Blachnicki remained in Germany until his sudden death in February 1987. In 2001, the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN) in Katowice began an investigation into the circumstances surrounding Blachnicki's death. The investigation lasted until 2005. During the investigation it was discovered that Blachnicki had been under surveillance by the SB and that two of his closet associates, Jolanta and Andrew Gontarczyków, had been supplying the SB with information about Blachnicki. The investigation also concluded that Blachnicki was poisoned. President Lech Kaczyński awarded Blachnicki the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta in 1994 and the Auschwitz Cross in 1995. In December 1995, Pope John Paul II began the process of beatifying Blachnicki. His body was moved from Germany to Krościenka and deposited in the Church of the Good Shepherd in April 2000.

Adolf Chojnacki

Father Chojnacki was born in Cichawie, a village in the district of Wieliczka, Poland, in 1932. He was an ardent Catholic and fought hard for the rights of the Church. The SB and the Communist authorities disliked him.²³⁰ The SB tried to force Chojnacki to be their informant through blackmail. Chojnacki's sister was trying to get a visa to leave Poland to be with her husband in Germany. Her visa was refused, but the SB told Father Chojnacki that, if he agreed to be an

²²⁹ Blachnicki, "Rola Kosciola," cz. 1.

²³⁰ Isakowicz-Zaleski, 74.

informer, it would be granted. He refused. As a result, Chojnacki was placed under SB observation. In its internal documents on Chojnacki, the SB referred to him by two code names: “Szerszeń” and “Adwokat”.²³¹

Throughout his career, Chojnacki was heavily involved in work with young people. Chojnacki’s focus on youth may in part have been a result of his friendship with Karol Wojtyła who, before he left Poland in 1978, was also a keen supporter of initiatives to bring young people into the life of the Church. While a parish priest in Bieżanów, Chojnacki spoke directly to the youth present in his church during mass in April 1982: “Youth, Poland belongs to you, but remember that communism with which we must fight did not fall from heaven ... because communism is a cancer on the body of Christianity ... a cancer that grows in the heart and which did not come here to our land by chance.”²³² In Christmas 1981, Chojnacki put up a Christmas tree in his church and decorated it with barbed wire. Instead of ornaments he hung slips of paper from the tree inscribed on which were dates that referred to previous instances of Communist persecution: 1956, 1968, 1970, and 1981.²³³ At the side of the altar in his church, he placed a Solidarity badge wrapped in barbed wire. Chojnacki was not afraid to display his opposition to the Communist system in general or under Martial Law in particular. These symbols remained in his church despite the intervention of the metropolitan curia.²³⁴ The curia tried to convince Chojnacki to remove the symbols from his church but he remained defiant.

Chojnacki often communicated his views on the situation in Poland through the use religious analogies and symbolism. For instance, shortly before the beginning of the great fast before Easter in 1982, Chojnacki noted in a sermon: “on Wednesday begins the great [fast] but we have been fasting for a long time”.²³⁵ Chojnacki was clearly referring here to the serious food shortages which people

²³¹ Isakowicz-Zaleski, 73.

²³² Balon-Mrocza and Szarek, 369.

²³³ Balon-Mrocza and Szarek, 368.

²³⁴ Informacje bieżące o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej w województwie miejskim krakowskim, 1981 r., sygn. 29/2382/450. Komitet krakowski PZPR wydział informacji analiz, dalekopis nr 86 dnia 25.02.1982.

²³⁵ Dalekopis nr 86, 25.02.1982.

were experiencing during the period of Martial Law. Later in his sermon, he thanked God that, despite the difficult times, there had been no bloodshed. However, injustice had to be corrected.

Chojnacki's openly anti-Communist stance brought him to the attention of the curia, which placed him under investigation because of allegations that Chojnacki had allowed people to distribute anti-Communist leaflets in church and pin anti-Communist flyers on the church notice board. Chojnacki knew about the investigation but, instead of exercising greater caution, he became even more open about his anti-Communist convictions. During a procession in June 1982, Chojnacki added his own symbols to the usual cross, icons and statues. These included mannequin hands tied up with rope and Polish flags bedecked with crowns made of barbed wire.²³⁶ In his sermons, he began openly to attack the state and those in power on the grounds that they had not been elected and did not owe their authority to the consent of the people. Chojnacki even condemned fellow priests who he claimed were working with the authorities and the SB. The SB recorded some of Chojnacki's sermons and threatened to bring him before a military court, and to use the recordings as evidence against him, unless he stopped speaking publicly against the state. Naturally, Chojnacki took no notice.

In order to curb Chojnacki's behaviour, the SB started taking measures to bring him under control. Since threats did not work, the SB switched to a different tactic and attempted to destroy his reputation. Rumours began to circulate about Chojnacki. Although it is impossible to say for certain how these rumours originated, it is likely that they were initiated by the SB. Chojnacki was accused of being a paedophile and of impregnating women. Historians Balon-Mroczka and Szarek, who collected documents on this case, believed that the SB blackmailed women to force them to make claims of improper conduct by Chojnacki.²³⁷ When this did not get the results they wanted, the SB started sending anonymous calls to people like vets or car towing people and directed them to Chojnacki. They did this in order to harass Chojnacki with the visits and create a nuisance for him.

²³⁶ Balon-Mroczka and Szarek, 368.

²³⁷ Balon-Mroczka and Szarek, 368-369.

There were also bogus rumours, probably initiated by the SB, that Chojnacki wanted to sell some personal items of property, such as a car or a television set. As a result, Chojnacki was pestered by people coming to his house enquiring after the item in question.²³⁸ Because they were rumours, they could not be traced back to the source. When this occurred Chojnacki would simply refer his unwanted visitors to the local SB office. Chojnacki also started receiving anonymous and abusive phone calls at all hours of the day and night. When Chojnacki started to recognise the voices of the anonymous callers, he passed the receiver to his dog the moment they started to speak.²³⁹

Despite his actions and behaviour, Chojnacki only suffered from threats and low-level harassment. Even though he was openly and vehemently anti-Communist, the state did not take more severe action against him. The lack of action suggests that the Communists were relatively restrained, for the most part, in terms of their treatment of priests under Martial Law. Despite the fact that priests like Chojnacki were so open in their hostility to the Communists, the state was reluctant to be seen to persecute them – an indication, perhaps, of the fact that, despite Martial Law, the position of the authorities was relatively weak. Instead, the state preferred to try to intimidate radical priests into silence by using more covert methods.

Chojnacki's experience under Martial Law can be reconstructed on the basis of material from the IPN texts. When using these sources, caution must be exercised because the people who selected them had an agenda, namely, to condemn the Communist authorities and lionise Chojnacki. But the story that these documents tell is consistent with other evidence – one of persistent, low-level harassment of Chojnacki. It was not until after Martial Law that the authorities took more drastic measures against him by attempting to kill him in a staged car accident.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Isakowicz-Zaleski, 75.

²³⁹ Balon-Mrocza and Szarek, 369.

²⁴⁰ Balon-Mrocza and Szarek, 370.

Jerzy Popiełuszko

Father Popiełuszko is the most well known of all the “turbulent priests” who took a public stance against Martial Law and the Communist system. He was born in Okopy near Suchowola, Poland, in 1947. At the time of the imposition of Martial Law, he was the vicar of the parish of Saint Stanisława Kostki in Żoliborz, Warsaw.²⁴¹ Popiełuszko was not only a parish priest. He was also a workplace chaplain, a hospital chaplain, and a chaplain for Solidarity in Warsaw. He was also very active in civic life. For example, he organised assistance for interned prisoners and their families. He also initiated a nationwide pilgrimage for the working people to Jasna Góra.²⁴² Popiełuszko’s services were usually packed. They were attended, not just by members of his parish, but by people who came from all over Poland to hear his sermons. On some occasions, more people would turn up for his services than would fit in the church. Those who arrived late would have to stand outside and listen to the service through speakers. Those who attended often recorded the sermons and the recordings were distributed and listened to throughout Poland. In the opinion of historian George Weigel, Popiełuszko came to embody the “resistance Church and its defiance of the Jaruzelski regime’s attempt to ‘normalize’ the situation in Poland”.²⁴³ Popiełuszko knew that there was a possibility that he could be interned because of his anti-Communist stance and his popularity.²⁴⁴ Nonetheless, he continued in his sermons to speak out against the authorities.

The SB used a variety of means to control Popiełuszko and hinder his activities. One of Popiełuszko’s colleagues became an informer and gave information about him to the SB. Popiełuszko talked to the informer about what he was planning to say in his sermons. In August 1982, he showed the informant maps he had drawn of the layouts of internment camps.²⁴⁵ The SB tried to lure Popiełuszko into criminal activity or activity against the state. One instance involved the SB sending a criminal to him in November 1982. The criminal asked Popiełuszko for

²⁴¹ Krawczak, and Wilanowski, 313.

²⁴² Krawczak and Wilanowski, 313.

²⁴³ Weigel, 148.

²⁴⁴ “Wokol ‘Zapiskow’ Ks. Jerzego,” *Solidarnosc: Tygodnik Mazowsze*. 5. XII. 1985, nr 149, 1-2.

²⁴⁵ Mysiakowska, 80.

shelter. Popiełuszko consulted his lawyer and sent the criminal elsewhere for assistance.²⁴⁶ The following day, the SB came to Popiełuszko's house, hoping to catch him with the criminal. Despite the failure of this attempt to entrap Popiełuszko, the authorities continued to try to ensnare him. In December 1982, a man came to ask Popiełuszko to use his connections to procure medicine. The authorities were apparently hoping that Popiełuszko would feel sorry for the man and pull some strings on his behalf. This would then expose Popiełuszko to charges of improper conduct²⁴⁷ However, Popiełuszko suspected a trap and refused to help the man.

Eventually, in December 1983 Popiełuszko was summoned to a court hearing. He refused to attend. Popiełuszko knew that a summons had been issued and he evaded the postman in order to avoid having to take receipt of the letter. The authorities attempted to give the summons to other priests and nuns on Popiełuszko's behalf but they refused to take it.²⁴⁸ The priests and nuns knew full well that Popiełuszko would not attend the hearing.

Popiełuszko was less overtly confrontational than Blachnicki or Chojnacki. Instead of attacking the authorities directly, as Blachnicki did, or using the fairly obvious symbolism that was employed by Chojnacki, Popiełuszko focused on the Bible and its message. In his sermons, he often drew parallels between the situation in Poland and with the life of Christ. Typical of Popiełuszko's style was a sermon of 26 September 1982, in which he said: "We can bear our sufferings and crosses jointly with Christ because the trial of Christ is still going on. The trial of Christ is going on in His brothers because actors of the drama and the trial of Christ are still alive, only their surnames and faces, their dates and places of birth

²⁴⁶ Mysiakowska, 85.

²⁴⁷ Mysiakowska, 88.

²⁴⁸ Mysiakowska, 135.

have changed.”²⁴⁹ Popiełuszko here makes no direct reference to the situation in Poland at all. But his meaning is clear.

One concept to which Popiełuszko frequently referred in his sermons was solidarity. The Solidarity movement itself saw Popiełuszko as one of their own. Even after Solidarity was banned, many activists regarded Popiełuszko as their pastor. According to Sophia Deboick, people throughout Poland saw him as “the symbol of the Polish struggle for liberty in the face of the political oppression”.²⁵⁰ Popiełuszko, Deboick claims, showed that saints who were political dissenters “can transcend boundaries between religious and secular”.²⁵¹ He loved his country and God and called for justice and liberty for his people. For many Solidarity supporters, Popiełuszko was a symbol of hope that it was possible to avoid violence in Polish political life.

Popiełuszko’s popularity and influence with the people was seen by the authorities as such a threat that they took drastic action to silence him forever. Significantly, Popiełuszko did not suffer imprisonment during the period of Martial Law itself. However, in October 1984, the SB tried but failed to kill Popiełuszko in a staged car accident. On 19 October 1984, four SB agents kidnapped, beat, and then killed Popiełuszko and dumped his body into the river Vistula. Instead of silencing Popiełuszko the SB only succeeded in turning him into a martyr. Around 250,000 people attended his funeral in November 1984.²⁵² Lech Wałęsa said at Popiełuszko’s funeral: “Solidarity lives because Popiełuszko shed his blood for it.”²⁵³ His grave became a pilgrimage site and people held on even tighter to the message that he preached. The Church recognised Popiełuszko’s martyrdom in 2010 when he was beatified.

²⁴⁹ M. and M. Jelinska, ed. “Parafia pod wezwaniem sw. Stanisława Kostki w Warszawie, Sanktuarium Blogosławionego ks. Jerzego Popiełuszki”

http://popieluszko.net.pl/english/xjerzy_en/ka820926_en.php (accessed 27 January 2014).

²⁵⁰ Sophia Deboick, “Jerzy Popiełuszko: a Polish hero,” *The Guardian*, 7 June 2010.

²⁵¹ Deboick.

²⁵² BBC, “On this Day: 30 October – 1984: Pro Solidarity priest is murdered.”

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/30/newsid_4111000/4111722.stm

²⁵³ BBC, “On this Day: 30 October – 1984.”

So there were three main features of the heroic priest. The first was the complete rejection of Communism. There was no possibility for compromise or acceptance. The second was the public criticism of the regime either directly or indirectly. Blachnicki, Chojnacki and Popietuszko all condemned the regime during the Martial Law period. And finally, there was a steadfast refusal to compromise in the face of harassment and persecution as well as disapproval by Church authorities. Despite the consequences, each of these individuals continued with their criticism and refused to give in to the pressure exerted by the authorities.

Parish priests

The secondary literature that deals with the lower clergy is dominated by the stories of priests such as Blachnicki, Chojnacki and especially Popietuszko. The inference is that their courage, fortitude and refusal to submit were representative of the lower clergy as a whole. But to what extent were they really representative? There can be no doubt that there were, in fact, many other priests who, though less well known, were no less forthright in their condemnation of Communism in general, and Martial Law in particular. For example, in June 1983 a priest in the parish church in Dobczyce openly denounced the directors of local schools for trying to prevent students from attending events during the papal visit of 1983. According to one internal PZPR document: "During Sunday sermons in the church, a parish priest called local school principals "cowards", because they do not want cancel school on June 22." ²⁵⁴ The priest felt that the principals were cooperating with authorities and giving in to their demands. Father Brozek, from the district of Słomniki, was even more open about expressing his anti-regime opinions. A PZPR committee that looked at his case noted that Brozek used every opportunity to voice his anti-Communist opinions. Brozek must surely have known that his anti-regime comments were likely to attract the attention of the authorities. Nonetheless, he continued publicly to criticise the authorities, for example by claiming that the media were being deceitful because the authorities controlled them. In one Teletype in February 1982, the central committee of the

²⁵⁴ Informacje bieżące o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej w województwie miejskim krakowskim, 1981 r., sygn. 29/2382/450; dalekopis 572 z dnia 16 czerwca 1983r.

PZPR wrote that Brozek had said: “who lies – tv, and who tells the truth – the Church”.²⁵⁵ He obviously felt that the Church was the only source of truth for the people and that they needed to know that there was no free media.

Father Mirosław Drzewiecki of Wrocław was another priest who took a public stance against Martial Law. On numerous occasions he called on Polish people in general, and young people in particular, to continue their resistance. Drzewiecki explicitly called upon young people to stand up and fight for their country.²⁵⁶ According to Drzewiecki the future of Poland was at stake and young people needed to fight for their country's survival because it was their future that was at risk. In a sermon of May 1982, Drzewiecki told his congregation that “where sense, reason, and ability to do are gone, people and countries die”.²⁵⁷

In the eyes of the authorities, Father Stefan Dzierzek was another priest who publicly expressed his adverse opinions of Communism. Dzierzek, the rector of the Jesuit Church in Kalisz, was charged for his actions.²⁵⁸ According to the authorities, between 24 December 1981 and 6 January 1982, Dzierzek had displayed a Christmas crib in his church, the contents of which “abused freedom of religion and threatened public law and order”.²⁵⁹ The crib that was displayed included a large-scale illustration of a weeping Mother of God with two stars in the background, a drawing of eight workers, a crib overturned and the baby Jesus bound with barbed wire several times.²⁶⁰ This display was a direct reference to the events that occurred in the “Wujek” colliery where nine men had been killed

²⁵⁵ Informacje bieżące o sytuacji politycznej i gospodarczej w województwie miejskim krakowskim, 1981 r., sygn. 29/2382/450. Komitet krakowski PZPR wydział informacji analiz, dalekopis nr 86 dnia 25.02.1982.

²⁵⁶ Informacja Dzienna nr 128/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 8 maja 1982 r, 8 May 1982. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁵⁷ Informacja Dzienna nr 128/82; Informacja Dzienna nr 129/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 9 maja 1982 r, 9 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁵⁸ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 305.

²⁵⁹ *The Church in Poland under Martial Law* (London: NSZZ “Solidarnosc” Information Office, 1983), 53.

²⁶⁰ *The Church in Poland*, 53.

by the security forces during a strike in December 1981.²⁶¹ For this reason the authorities felt that Dzierzek's protest was provocative and a threat to public order. Despite the charges, Dzierzek did not believe himself to be in the wrong. When the chairman of the court asked if he was pleading guilty, Dzierzek responded that he was guilty of exhibiting the crib but not of being guilty.²⁶² In his defence, Dzierzek emphasized that he simply wanted to show Christ in their (the Polish people's) own reality. When he was questioned about the possible consequences of the crib, for example that it might promote violence, Dzierzek stressed that this was not possible. He said in his defence: "People were coming to the church to pray, to share their great troubles. When they saw Christ coming to them like that, it calmed them down ... no one can leave Him and the church with vengeance in his or her heart ...".²⁶³

Another priest who was as candid in his opposition to the regime as Blachnicki, Chojnacki and Popiełuszko was Father Stanisław Orzechowski. Orzechowski was a chaplain for students and an academic priest in the Archdiocese of Wrocław.²⁶⁴ He also had close connections to Popiełuszko, with whom he was a close friend. When he had been training for the priesthood, Orzechowski had attended lectures by Karol Wojtyła, which he highly regarded and to which he often referred.²⁶⁵ Orzechowski participated in hunger strikes on the Wrocław railway.²⁶⁶

Orzechowski used his pulpit to voice his criticisms of the authorities, particularly, during the Martial Law period. He repeatedly stated his view that God, not the Communist Party or the security forces, would decide the future of Poland. For him, "Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Martial Law, WRON", none of it mattered

²⁶¹ "President marks 30th anniversary of brutal Wujek coal mine massacre," 16.12.2011. <https://www.thenews.pl/1/9/Artykul/80613,President-marks-30th-anniversary-of-brutal-Wujek-coal-mine-massacre>.

²⁶² *The Church in Poland*, 54.

²⁶³ *The Church in Poland*, 54.

²⁶⁴ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 312.

²⁶⁵ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 312.

²⁶⁶ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 312.

because they would not decide Poland's fate.²⁶⁷ Orzechowski particularly emphasised that, while months were passing by, the situation in Poland was not improving for the people. This was an implicit criticism of the authorities, who had claimed that the introduction of Martial Law would lead to improved conditions for the people. Orzechowski was also publicly critical of the regime's ideology. In a sermon delivered in the church of St. Wawrzynca, in Lubartow, on 12 April 1982, Orzechowski argued that the regime's Marxist ideology meant, in practice, "one works, ten supervise and twenty starve".²⁶⁸ Orzechowski was criticising the methods employed by the authorities and how they impacted on the population. He insisted that it was important for young Polish people to go on pilgrimages regardless of the fact that the authorities disapproved.²⁶⁹ In addition to speaking openly about the poor situation in Poland, Orzechowski continued to pray for the people, particularly those who had been interned. He prayed that the people arrested could be reunited with the rest of the population.²⁷⁰

There is plenty of evidence of discontent among the lower clergy aimed at the moderation of the higher clergy and even at the Pope. The lower clergy is portrayed, in the literature, as more radical than the higher clergy and that they went significantly further than the Church. The higher clergy is portrayed as being primarily concerned about the Church as a whole and, therefore, the priests' openly anti-Communist stance jeopardised the Church's position.²⁷¹ So the higher clergy were labelled as being focused on the Church, whereas, the lower clergy were concerned about the laity themselves. Overall, in the literature, the higher clergy tried to maintain a middle position, careful to not support one side over the other, in case they were accused of favouring either the Communists or Solidarity. In many cases, the Church was a medium between the government

²⁶⁷ Informacja Dzienna nr 101/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 11 kwietnia 1982 r, 11 April 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1;

²⁶⁸ Informacja Dzienna nr 102/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 kwietnia 1982 r, 12 April 1982 Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁶⁹ Informacja Dzienna nr 122/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 2 Maja 1982 r, 2 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁷⁰ Informacja Dzienna nr 101/82, 11 April 1982.

²⁷¹ Informacja Dzienna nr 132/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 Maja 1982 r, 12 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

and Solidarity.²⁷² It tried to open channels of discussion between the two organisations and having a neutral stance helped keep arguments to a minimum. The higher clergy wanted to avoid being too political and stay true to its message of protecting moral standards and concern for the psychological wellbeing of the Polish people. The Church's main endeavour would always be with "the cure of souls".²⁷³ Its first duty would be to "propagate the Faith, to administer the sacraments and to tend the quick and the dead".²⁷⁴ For the Church, the individual was where its energies lay rather than the state and the nation. But some of the priests felt that the Church was not going far enough. Seeing their parishioners regularly no doubt would have coloured the priests' views and, as a result, the higher clergy's response was not enough from their perspective.²⁷⁵

There were criticisms against Glemp and even the Pope for being too conciliatory and not doing enough to oppose the regime. Some of the priests felt that Glemp was getting too close to the Communist authorities, especially Jaruzelski. They did not agree with his willingness to compromise with the authorities.²⁷⁶ Glemp was trying to negotiate with the authorities to achieve certain ends but in the ranks of the lower clergy there were some who felt that these goals should be attained in another fashion. There was a priest who was not only critical of Glemp but went as far as to criticise the Pope. Father Ulalek, a Capuchin priest of the academic parish of Augustine in Wrocław, disagreed with the Pope's actions during his 1983 visit to Poland. Ulalek felt that the Pope should not have had a private meeting with Lech Wałęsa, during his visit at his home, because it undermined his position.²⁷⁷ The Pope also had a meeting with Jaruzelski during the same visit. For Ulalek, John Paul II was a "Communist Pope".²⁷⁸ Clearly he felt that the Pope was not performing his duties to the full extent of his power. He

²⁷² Hruby, 326.

²⁷³ Norman Davies, *God's Playgrounds: A History of Poland in two volumes, vol. II 1795 to the Present* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), 207.

²⁷⁴ Davies, 207.

²⁷⁵ de Weydenthal et al.

²⁷⁶ Informacja Dzienna nr 240/83, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 8 września 1983 r, 8 September 1983, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2169_2.

²⁷⁷ Informacja Dzienna nr 189/83, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 29 czerwca 1983 r, 29 June 1983, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2169_2.

²⁷⁸ Informacja Dzienna nr 189/83, 29 June 1983.

had hoped that the Pope would be more political during his visit and was sorely disappointed. Ulalek exhibited the same mindset as Stehle, who argued in the first chapter that the papal visit was not used to its full potential.²⁷⁹

In some instances, the Church disciplined the lower clergy for their outspokenness. It did this by instigating that priests should punish other priests if they were too political in their sermons.²⁸⁰ This discipline was a type of peer mediation in that priests were told by the Church to monitor each other and prevent overly political sermons.

The Communist authorities responded cautiously to the problem of these “turbulent priests” who used their pulpits and their churches to condemn the regime and its policies. They kept priests under observation, harassed them, and sometimes worse than that. But, in general, the authorities were reluctant to attack priests. Priests who attracted the attention of the authorities were first of all placed under surveillance. If the authorities felt these priests were too much of a threat, they often began a campaign of intimidation against them. Whenever priests were stopped and found with leaflets that were anti-Communist in nature, they were detained and arrested. Fear would spread when a priest was arrested because the remaining clergy wondered who would be next.²⁸¹ Threats were a common tool used by the Communist authorities. One priest from Gdansk experienced these threats when he visited interned prisoners in 1981 and 1982. The authorities told him that, if he talked to people on the outside about what he saw and heard on his visits to the internment camps, he would be killed. In addition, he was told in no uncertain terms that he was being closely watched.²⁸²

Occasionally the authorities used violence against recalcitrant priests. For example, Stanisław Kowalczyk, a Dominican and pastor, was involved in a serious car accident in April 1983. He died after several weeks in hospital from

²⁷⁹ Stehle, “Poland,” 42.

²⁸⁰ Informacja Dzienna nr 146/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 26 Maja 1982 r, 26 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁸¹ Informacja Dzienna nr 134/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 14 maja 1982 r, 14 May 1982. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

²⁸² Informacja Dzienna nr 189/83, 29 June 1983.

the injuries he sustained as a result of the crash.²⁸³ The circumstances of his death were suspicious and an investigation was conducted by the IPN in Poznań but the outcome is unknown. The common belief is that Kowalczyk was a victim of the SB.²⁸⁴

Most cases of the suspected murder of priests came after the Martial Law period. Stefan Niedzielak, a priest from Warsaw, was found dead in his apartment on 21 January 1989. He had numerous injuries, including torn ligaments. His death remains unexplained. But Niedzielak was a person of interest to the SB. He was under their surveillance and suffered harassment at their hands.²⁸⁵ Stanisław Suchowolec of Białystok was another priest who interested the SB. He had received anonymous letters and death threats. Suchowolec was found dead a week before the start of the round table negotiations. The prosecutor said Suchowolec's death resulted from metal monoxide poisoning. He was also a friend of Popietuszeko. In 2006, IPN investigators came to the conclusion that he was murdered by the SB. Sylwester Zych, born in Ostrówek and pastor of the St. James parish, was found at a bus station in Krynicy Morskiej in July 1989. While his death remains unexplained, his followers believe it to be the work of the SB. There is limited information about the deaths during this period. It is possible there were more cases but without further evidence we cannot say that definitively.²⁸⁶

During the period of Martial Law, however, the authorities were generally reluctant to be too aggressive against prominent priests. The SB had created a list of priests whom they deemed to be extremists. During one operation, the SB identified eight priests in the Kraków area that needed to be monitored.

"Operation Raven" listed these men: "Father Adolf Chojnacki, Father Kazimierz Jancarz, Father Andrzej Kloczkowski, Brother Paweł Młynarz, Father Władysław

²⁸³ "Ofiary stanu wojennego i lat następny do 1989"
<http://wyborcza.pl/1,77062,3787704.html#ixzz30eSMPSL2> (accessed 1 May 2014).

²⁸⁴ "Ofiary stanu wojennego."

²⁸⁵ "Ofiary stanu wojennego."

²⁸⁶ "Ofiary stanu wojennego."

Palmonski, - (name illegible), Father Józef Tischner, Father Józef Życiński”.²⁸⁷

This list was later reduced to exclude the last two names. The reason was that the higher up authorities decided that the list could not include priests in charge of important parishes, employees of the curia or professors of Catholic Colleges.²⁸⁸

The priests on the list were constantly brought in for SB interrogations with the intent of collecting incriminating evidence. These men were under systematic surveillance. Each was assigned a special code name which was used in SB reports. Their photos and car registrations were circulated to militia stations.²⁸⁹ As in the case of Popietuszko, the people closest to the priests were also monitored and details were collected from them.

But these priests were not necessarily representative of the lower clergy as a whole. There were priests who regarded Solidarity as too radical, others who wanted to avoid further escalation of tension, and some who believed that the Church should not be entangled in political questions.

Historians Luxmoore and Babiuch, for instance argue that the number of priests who took a radical stance against the Communist regime during the period of Martial Law was much lower than is commonly perceived. In their opinion, only 390 priests out of 21,000 were “sporadically”, “frequently”, or “systematically negative” about the regime.²⁹⁰ If Luxmoore and Babiuch are right, priests who took a public stand against Martial Law constituted only a small – albeit very visible – minority of the priesthood as a whole. Whilst it is extremely difficult to quantify the degree to which priests publicly opposed Martial Law, it is perhaps significant that – as already mentioned – that the authorities in Kraków at the time of Operation Raven considered only eight priests to be enough of a threat to warrant surveillance, a figure that was subsequently reduced to six.

²⁸⁷ *The Church in Poland*, 51.

²⁸⁸ *The Church in Poland*, 51.

²⁸⁹ *The Church in Poland*, 51.

²⁹⁰ Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag: The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1999), 248.

Some priests felt they had to protect the position of the Church within the Communist system in Poland, such priests occasionally criticised the radicalism of the Solidarity movement. For example, Father Podleska, a member of the Franciscan order, believed that the introduction of Martial Law had prevented the outbreak of civil war in Poland.²⁹¹ Violence was a major concern for the Church but Podleska obviously felt that Martial Law would ensure that any large-scale violence would be prevented. In addition, Podleska stated that Solidarity's aspirations were not possible. He felt that their goals were too ambitious and that they would not achieve them because many of the demands of Solidarity activists "were not acceptable to the authorities".²⁹² Podleska's views seem to have been based on the assumption that the Communist system in Poland could not be removed, and that it was therefore dangerous for Solidarity to make demands that to which the Communists would never agree.

Other priests seem to have been primarily focused on preventing the outbreak of violence. Father A. Zienkiewicz, Head of the Central University Chaplaincy in Wrocław, for example, was adamant about trying to prevent violence from escalating. This was his main concern, rather than attempting to force a change within the country. Zienkiewicz said in the church of St. Peter and Paul in Wrocław on 18 March 1982 that the slogan, "work slowly," would encourage negative habits and harm the nation.²⁹³ Zienkiewicz did not approve of this deliberate action as a means of passive resistance. While the authorities were concerned about the financial repercussions of strikes, many clergymen were primarily concerned about the impact of strikes on the people themselves. In his own way, Zienkiewicz was trying to maintain a sense of normality under Martial Law. As we saw in the first chapter, Osa argues that the lower clergy were determined to preserve the essence of "Polishness". From this perspective, Zienkiewicz concentrated on maintaining calm and having life continue as it had before Martial Law.

²⁹¹ Informacja Dzienna nr 2/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 2 stycznia 1982 r, 2 January 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 2.

²⁹² Informacja Dzienna nr 2/82, 2 January 1982.

²⁹³ Informacja Dzienna nr 78/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 19 marca 1982 r, 19 March 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

There were priests who avoided taking sides and concerned themselves solely with the wellbeing of the people. Father Mieczysław Tyburczego used his sermons in St. Augustyn's Church in Wrocław to pray for the interned prisoners of the Solidarity movement. But he also prayed for the families of the country that were divided by politics. Tyburczego felt that families should not allow their political affiliations, whether to Solidarity or the Communist Party, to come between family members. He was concerned about the psychological impact of having families divided and wanted to bring back unity to the family home.²⁹⁴ Father Józef Tischner, the priest-philosopher of Solidarity, was deeply concerned about morals and the exploitation of people.²⁹⁵ Janice Schultz argued that, in Tischner's words: "exploiting work is exploiting a human being, engendering moral suffering, since one cannot be separated from one's work".²⁹⁶ Tischner was particularly focused on a sense of solidarity, common good, and concern for other human beings. That is why he examined moral pain that resulted from human labour where the person was treated as "a *means* in the work process, rather than as the *end* of the process".²⁹⁷ According to Tischner, to treat people as mere tools in the production process was to undermine their human dignity.

In some instances, priests criticised fellow priests who became involved in politics or used political language too freely. Zienkiewicz and Father S. Pawalaczyk, lecturer and rector of the church of St. Martin in Wrocław, criticised Father Drzieski on the grounds that his language was too outspoken and provocative.²⁹⁸ This matter was discussed during a meeting with other priests in May 1982. Students were concerned about Drzieski's wellbeing and frequently asked about him. Both Zienkiewicz and Pawalaczyk felt the need to draw attention away from Drzieskiego and asked students to stop inquiring about him. Clearly both priests

²⁹⁴ Informacja Dzienna nr 24/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 24 stycznia 1982 r, 24 January 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 2.

²⁹⁵ Jozef Tischner, *The Spirit of Solidarity*, trans. Marek B. Zaleski and Benjamin Fiore (S.J. San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984).

²⁹⁶ Janice L. Schultz, "Moral Motivation and the Power of Example," *The Polish Review*, 31, no. 2/3 (1986): 108.

²⁹⁷ Schultz, 102.

²⁹⁸ Informacja Dzienna nr 132/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 Maja 1982 r, 12 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

were uncomfortable with the militancy of Drzieski's rhetoric, for example his appeal to the youth of Poland to stand and fight for their country. It would seem that Zienkiewicz and Pawalaczyk felt that priests should avoid language that might incite people to violence.

Regardless of the political orientation of the priests, a key focus for almost all of them was exercising their pastoral functions by attending to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of their congregations. For example, as we saw in the previous chapter, some priests visited interned prisoners and provided material support such as food, money, and clothes. As a result of their concern for the laity, some of the clergy were punished for their actions. For example, in June 1983, a Jesuit priest from the city of Kalisz was sentenced to two months imprisonment for collecting aid for the relatives of political prisoners.²⁹⁹ In another example, Father Sudol pushed for information about interned Solidarity members in order to give them assistance, particularly in April 1982.³⁰⁰ More often than not, very little was known about interned prisoners but priests had more access than anyone else. Therefore, when families wanted to know about their family members, they went to their priest for help.³⁰¹

These visits by the clergy to see the internees were crucial to those being held in the internment camps. Henryk Sporon who as we saw in chapter 1 spent many months in prisons and internment camps, described the importance of the priests and their presence among the interned. When he was in the camp at Jastrzębie-Szeroka, Cardinal Macharski and several other clergy, including Father Kukulowicz, came to visit the interned prisoners. The clergy spoke to each person for a few minutes and celebrated mass with them. As a parting gift, the Cardinal gave the internees a beautiful edition of the Gospel according to Luke.³⁰² The internees drew strength and joy from the priests. But there was one mass that particularly stood out in Sporon's memory. It was an Easter service at Úherce and

²⁹⁹ Kohan et al.

³⁰⁰ Informacja Dzienna nr 24/82; Informacja Dzienna nr 109/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 19 kwietnia 1982 r, 19 April 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁰¹ Stehle, "Poland," 42.

³⁰² Sporon, 23.

the officiating priest was Father Bishop Przemyski. The internees gathered in the hall at dawn and began to sing. Through the windows, they could see the local villagers heading towards their church at the centre of the village. This spurred Sporon and the others to sing louder so that the villagers could hear them. The internees sang: "Life has overcome death – today He arose from the tomb..." and the villagers stopped to listen until the beginning of the service inside the church. They continued singing songs like "Alleluia, alleluia," "Polonin," "We are happy today, as the day appears," "Conqueror of death, of hell and Satan," "Hold the tears you are weeping; let go of the grief in your heart." It was later that Sporon and the other internees heard from relatives who were staying in Úherce that the prisoners' singing had made a big impression on the villagers. They were told that the residents listened intently and shed many tears of emotion.³⁰³ It was the presence of the lower clergy that gave the internees the strength and courage to perform such actions. The priests were their connection to their faith, to their families, and to their country.

The clergy were particularly concerned about the civil and human rights of their parishioners. As historian Archie Brown argued, the Catholic Church was "a stronger institution enjoying independence from the state than was to be found elsewhere in Communist Europe – [and] had since 1968 increasingly spoken up in defence of civil rights."³⁰⁴ The Church, particularly the lower clergy, wanted their parishioners to have all the rights entitled to all human beings.³⁰⁵ For them, the defence of human and civil rights stemmed from the fact that they were human. These liberties were "inviolable and inalienable rights not due to any grants from a government or communities".³⁰⁶ The lower clergy needed to step in to defend the people because the authorities were depriving them of their rights. The laity was unable openly to state their views or question official actions unless

³⁰³ Sporon, 23-24.

³⁰⁴ Brown, 426.

³⁰⁵ Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 153.

³⁰⁶ Bogdan Szajkowski, "The Catholic Church in Defense of Civil Society in Poland," In *Poland After Solidarity: Social Movements versus the State*, ed. Bronislaw Misztal (New Brunswick: Transaction books, 1985), 80.

they went through demonstrations or strikes.³⁰⁷ Therefore, there were some priests who urged the authorities to respect the human rights of the Polish people.³⁰⁸ For example, there were some priests who were particularly displeased when workers from Trzebnica were not receiving their coal and food from the authorities.³⁰⁹ Yet the people were expected to continue to sell their produce to the regime. The priests had to stand up for their parishioners to ensure that they were given a fair chance and not left to starve. But defending the human and civil rights was not an easy endeavour. There was a balancing act required between defending these rights and helping to stabilise the social and economic situation without risking the Church's role as mediator.³¹⁰

There was a great deal of pressure placed upon priests to control the people, particularly when the state removed crosses from schools and workplaces. The authorities used the constitution as their justification that the secular and religious spheres needed to be separated.³¹¹ Each time a cross was removed from a certain place, the laity returned it. When asked repeatedly to convince the people to remove crosses and other religious symbols from public places, priests refused to do so on the grounds that it was the people's will that these symbols be publicly displayed.³¹²

One tantalising question is how priests in Poland under Martial Law expected the political situation to develop, were they pessimistic or optimistic? Did any of them foresee the impending, existential crisis of the Communist system? Unfortunately, it is very difficult to answer such questions on the basis of the available evidence. Some priests were extremely outspoken. For those who were forthright, it is impossible to know whether they were this way due to confidence or simply principle. However, since they were the type of people who spoke their minds, and Blachnicki was able to say anything all, the fact that they did not discuss the

³⁰⁷ de Weydenthal, 265.

³⁰⁸ Ackerman and DuVall, 153-154.

³⁰⁹ Informacja Dzienna nr 12/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 stycznia 1982 r., 12 January 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 2.

³¹⁰ Ronald C. Monticone, *The Catholic Church in Communist Poland 1945-1985: Forty Years of Church-State Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 143.

³¹¹ Monticone, 63.

³¹² Informacja Dzienna nr 12/82, 12 January 1982.

future is unusual. Most of the priests were far less outspoken. One possibility could be cautiousness based on the assumption that Communism would remain, at least for the foreseeable future. But another option could be based on the principal belief that priests should not mix religion with politics.

Conclusion

The heroic priest depicted in the hagiographical literature was fundamentally against Communism. There was no middle ground, no room for them to even consider the possibility of adapting Communism to suit Poland. As a result of his intransigence, the heroic priest suffered in some way. But the heroic ideal was not representative of all priests. Most of the priests during the Martial Law period were much more cautious, particularly, about getting involved in politics. Some priests were afraid of the consequences involved that would impact either the Church or themselves. On the other hand, most priests were determined to carry out their spiritual and pastoral duties. These actions, however, under the conditions of Martial Law, meant that even “apolitical” priests frequently crossed the blurred border between political and non-political. By simply carrying out their duties, priests performed a crucial role in sustaining resistance under Martial Law. Furthermore, the authorities were cautious in attacking priests. When they did take action, against what they deemed to be threats, they preferred to use covert means of harassing/attacking priests. This is indicative that, despite Martial Law, the regime remained in a position of relative weakness vis-à-vis the Church.

Chapter Three: The Higher Clergy

This chapter will explore the role of the higher clergy under Martial Law and their actions during this period. The main question that is addressed in this chapter is whether the higher clergy were too conciliatory towards the Communist authorities during the period of Martial Law. After a brief look at the primary and secondary sources, the chapter will look at some specific individuals, including Primate Józef Glemp. I will attempt to ascertain whether these men were representative of the higher clergy as a whole and how other higher clergymen behaved during this period. Finally, I shall investigate how the regime dealt with the higher clergy before assessing whether the response of the higher clergy to Martial Law was too conciliatory.

Primary and secondary sources

Archival material on the higher clergy does have its limitations. In the documents I was able to gather during my research trip to Poland in 2013, only small fragments or paragraphs focused on individual bishops, archbishops or cardinals. The main information gathered about the higher clergy came from daily information documents compiled by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych). Of course, we must be cautious about the reliability of these sources because of the nature and purpose of documents compiled under a dictatorship. But they do give an insight into which individuals were of particular interest to the regime. Another source of archival material comes in the form of a compiled book with documents from The Central Archives of Modern Records (Archiwum Akt Nowych). The limitation of this source is that in the original documents, we see the Church through the eyes of the PZPR. But the documents included in this volume were selected by the compilers who had their own agenda. They would have chosen the PZPR documents that best suited their interests and objectives. Another example of an edited volume of documents is *Tajne Dokumenty Państwo- Kościół 1980-1989* (Secret Documents – State and Church, 1980-1989). This volume contains secret papers of state documents from sessions of a shared committee, which was made up of representatives from the

government and episcopate. In one of the documents, Cardinal Gulbinowicz admitted that the Church was having problems with the younger priests. The state argued that it was the bishops who were to blame because they were responsible for them.³¹³

In contemporary newspapers that covered events in Poland, most of the remarks that are made pertaining to the higher clergy are of a vague and sweeping character. Foreign journalist John Kifner, for example, wrote in one of his articles in *The New York Times* that, in September 1982, the bishops had sent a private and even stronger memorandum to the government “in view of the further aggravation of our country’s situation”.³¹⁴ Unfortunately, Kifner does not tell us how many bishops added their names to this document, who they were, and what exactly was written. This makes it very difficult to assess the significance and analytical implications of the memorandum in question. Similarly *The Daily Record*, in February 1982, noted that: “The bishops along with all of society are awaiting that the state of war will be over as quickly as possible ...”.³¹⁵ The article continues to argue that the Church had issued its most explicitly critical statement since the imposition of Martial Law. However, the article does not say what made it more explicit compared to other statements. This makes it difficult to determine if the claim is true without further evidence.

In the secondary literature, the higher clergy are frequently treated as a group. At most, there are only sweeping generalisations. In their book, *A Force More Powerful*, Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall argue that the Church was able to preserve its autonomy from the state and kept the loyalty of a mass following.³¹⁶ This statement is typical of the generic way in which historians use the term “Church” so that it is very difficult to determine whether they are referring to the higher clergy or the clergy as a whole. When the higher clergy is referred to, often, they are grouped together and the assumption is that everyone agreed with

³¹³ *Tajne dokumenty Panstw-Kosciol 1980-1989* (Londyn-Warszawa: Aneks-Polityka, 1993), 187.

³¹⁴ John Kifner, “Bishops in Poland Warn Authorities,” *The New York Times*, 18 September 1982, 3.

³¹⁵ “To Martial Law: Poland’s Catholic Leaders call for end,” *The Daily Record*, 27 February 1982, 4.

³¹⁶ Peter Ackerman and Jack DuVall, *A Force More Powerful: A Century of Nonviolent Conflict* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2000), 153.

the specific action or statement that is being described. For example, Adam Bromke argued that the “bishops” were cautioning the people against open resistance, which they felt would only lead to unnecessary violence and bloodshed.³¹⁷ Even if it is true that most bishops adopted this cautious stance, there is no reason to assume that all bishops took this vigilant position. There is a bit more literature on individual members of the higher clergy, especially Józef Glemp. Being the primate, and therefore the leader of the Church within Poland, Glemp is often discussed as if his views were representative of the higher clergy as a whole.

In the Polish sources, there are a few examples of historians who have investigated the role of the higher clergy. Peter Raina, for example, has written a number of relevant texts. One is his book, *Kościół w Polsce 1981-1984* (The Church in Poland 1981-1984), which focuses on the situation of the Church between 1981 and 1984. Raina includes conference notes where the bishops met to discuss inviting the Pope, updating him on the situation in Poland, and discussing amongst themselves their religious duties.³¹⁸ The meetings also considered some aspects of Martial Law and the efforts of the bishops to calm the situation and promote dialogue. Raina also wrote *Prymas i Episkopat Polski o stanie wojennym* (The Primate and the Polish Episcopate during Martial Law) and *Arcybiskup Dabrowski w sluzbie Kosciola i narodu* (Archbishop Dabrowski in the service to the Church and Nation). Both texts examine the Church and its response during the Martial Law period. *Prymas i Episkopat Polski* particularly looks at how the Church defended the interests of the nation, its work for justice and raising the spirit of the nation. Though they are useful, Raina’s various texts are also rather hagiographical. Andrzej Paczkowski’s book, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce* (The Poland-Jaruzelski War: Martial Law in Poland) 13 XII 1981- 22 VII 1983, briefly looks at the Church. While the higher clergy is not analysed as a group, Paczkowski does discuss Glemp. He argues

³¹⁷ Adam Bromke, “Socialism with a Martial Face,” *The World Today*, 38, no. 7/8 (July-August 1982): 270.

³¹⁸ Peter Raina, *Kościół w Polsce 1981-1984* (Londyn: „Veritas”, 1985), 181; 185.

that Glemp's predecessor, Wyszyński, fought for the people like no other person.³¹⁹

The historiography does make the distinction, albeit intermittently, between the "moderate" higher clergy and the "radical" lower clergy. Historian Patrick Michel hints at this division when he describes the bishops (but not the lower clergy) as having an "ambivalent attitude" towards the laity. According to Michel, the higher clergy risked dividing "the Church, [and also] creating a rift between the hierarchy and the more radical lower clergy".³²⁰ Some historians use the generic term "episcopate" when discussing the higher clergy. For example, Hank Johnston and Jozef Figa argued in a journal article that: "The government's use of the episcopate in time of crisis suggests both the authority of the church and its moderating role."³²¹ The limitation of this type of statement is that the term is still general and assumes that the higher clergy and, by extension, the entire Church, are a moderating force. This was simply not the case, as will be shown.

Many newspapers at the time, and historians subsequently, have claimed that the lower clergy were determined that the Church should play a more political role. In December 1982, *The New York Times* argued that the lower clergy wanted to discuss the Church's role in Poland's political life.³²² The implication here is that the lower clergy wanted to play a more active role in Polish society and were unhappy with the caution of their superiors. Another example is provided by historian George Weigel who wrote: "[an] increasingly volatile younger Polish clergy were demanding that the Church leadership take a more vocal and public stance against the Jaruzelski regime".³²³ The question here is was there really a large distinction between the two groups?

³¹⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981- 22 VII 1983*. (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2006), 211-212.

³²⁰ Patrick Michel, *Politics and Religion in Eastern Europe: Catholicism in Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia*, trans. Alan Braley (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 43-44.

³²¹ Hank Johnston and Jozef Figa, "The Church and Political Opposition: Comparative Perspectives on Mobilization against Authoritarian Regimes," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 27, no. 1 (March 1988): 43.

³²² "Glomp and priests said to clash," *The New York Times*, 9 December 1982.

³²³ Weigel, 147.

Primate Glemp

Józef Glemp was born in Inowrocław, Poland, on 18 December 1929 and died in Warsaw on 23 January 2013. He studied at the seminaries of Gniezno and Poznań. During the German occupation, Glemp worked as a labourer on a German farm. Later, between 1950-1952, Glemp studied philosophy at the Primate's Seminary in Gniezno.³²⁴ He remained there until 1956 and, after he was ordained, he studied at the Archbishop's Seminary in Poznań. Between 1958 and 1964, Glemp undertook graduate studies at the Lateran and Gregorian Universities in Rome.³²⁵ On his return to Poland in 1964, Glemp was to the appointed Secretariat of the Higher Priests' Seminary and the Secretariat of the Metropolitan Curia.

From December 1967, Glemp held several positions within the higher clergy. He was the secretary and chaplain of Primate Wyszyński, a lecturer on Roman and canon law at Warsaw's Catholic Theological Academy, and secretary of the Episcopate's Commission on Polish Institutes in Rome. Glemp was also a member of the Episcopate's Commission on the Revision of Canon Law and legal advisor to the Primate's Secretariat. In 1972, he received the rank of honorary chaplain of Pope Paul VI. On 4 March 1979, John Paul II named Glemp Bishop of Warmia. During his time as bishop, he established twenty-one new parishes and founded the Institute of Christian Culture in Olsztyn.³²⁶ Over two years later, he was named Archbishop of Gniezno and Primate of Poland. He was given the primate position after Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński passed away in May 1981. From 1982, Glemp served as President of the Polish Bishops' Conference and the President of the General Council or Permanent Council as it had been once known.³²⁷ In February 1983 he was appointed a Cardinal-Priest by Pope John

³²⁴ Tadeusz Krawczak, and Cyrian Wilanowski, *Kościół w stanie wojennym* (Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy Pax, 2008), 306.

³²⁵ "Cardinal Jozef Glemp," *The Telegraph*, (24 January 2013) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/religion-obituaries/9825172/Cardinal-Jozef-Glemp.html> (accessed March 2014).

³²⁶ "Jozef Kardynal Glemp" http://www.prymaspolski.pl/pl/historia/poczet_prymasow_polski_/jozef_kardynal_glemp_ur_1929_r_mi_anowany_1981_r_arcybiskupem_gnieznienskim_i_warszawskim_kreowany_kardynalem_w_1983_r_.html (accessed March 2014).

³²⁷ "Jozef Kardynal Glemp."

Paul II. Glemp remained primate until 2009. In January 2013 he died of lung cancer and was buried in a crypt in St. John's Cathedral in Warsaw.

The available literature is generally unenthusiastic about Glemp. Michael Burleigh argues that Glemp "was not a widely admired figure – some called him 'comrade Glemp'".³²⁸ Burleigh explains that this was partly because Glemp had a "more collegial style of Church governance than his predecessor Wyszyński"³²⁹ and this allowed for different voices to be heard, some of which placed more trust in General Jaruzelski than in Lech Wałęsa. Sophia Deboick, explains in an article in the *Guardian* that not everyone showed unity in the Church and that Glemp "believed that each Pole should 'subordinate themselves to the new situation'".³³⁰ Of course, Glemp did have an important role to play within Poland during the Martial Law period. Kifner wrote that Glemp's priorities were to "preserve the Church and its unique tolerated position in the Soviet bloc and, by urging calm, to protect the nation from possible rioting, civil war and Soviet invasion."³³¹ Others described Glemp as a clever man. According to an article in *The Economist*, Glemp knew his limitations. But, after all, not "every salt-miner's son studied civil law and canon law in Rome."³³² Nonetheless, Glemp's position in Poland was always going to be uncomfortable. Not only did he have to fill the shoes of Cardinal Wyszyński, who had been enormously popular, but he would also suffer by comparison with Karol Wojtyła, who had been elected Pope. Glemp was constantly compared with his popular predecessor, Wyszyński, whom even the Communist leaders felt compelled to describe as "a great patriot". Solidarity praised Wyszyński for his "vital assistance" to their cause.³³³ Glemp was unable to "command the same prestige as his predecessor, Wyszyński, who had played

³²⁸ Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes: The Clash of Religion and Politics, from the Great War to the War on Terror* (New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 2007), 433.

³²⁹ Burleigh, 433.

³³⁰ Sophia Deboick, "The church, Occupy LSX and Solidarnosc," *The Guardian* (16 December 2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/belief/2011/dec/16/church-occupy-lsx-solidarnosc?INTCMP=SRCH> (accessed 24 April 2012).

³³¹ John Kifner, "For Poland's Church, A New Relationship with the State," *The New York Times*, 14 November 1982.

³³² "Jozef Glemp: Cardinal Jozef Glemp, primate of Poland during the Solidarity years, died on January 23rd, aged 83," *The Economist*, 2 February 2013.

³³³ Reuter News Agency, "Poland mourns death of Cardinal Wyszyński," *The Globe and Mail*, 29 May 1981, 12.

a crucial role in moderating the crises in 1956 and in 1970.”³³⁴ In an obituary on Glemp, one author emphasized the degree to which Glemp had been trapped:

The primate was caught. His own pope, his own bishops, the lower orders of the clergy and most laymen, were with Solidarity. As its local leader, conscious that the church held unusual power within a Communist state, aware that it depended on government forbearance to spread the gospel message, traumatised by its wartime suffering, and in constant dread of Soviet intervention, he preferred to try to rub along with the authorities on one side and succour Solidarity mildly on the other.³³⁵

Here, the newspaper is underlining the circumstances with which Glemp had to deal with and perhaps explaining why he behaved as he did.

It is true that Glemp was generally a very cautious figure. Indeed, some have claimed that it was his conciliatory nature that explains why he was chosen for the role of primate in the first place.³³⁶ However, it has also been argued that his personality was considered to be too reserved and that some priests felt he was “too conciliatory and accommodating” and “overly cautious”.³³⁷ Despite the fact that the majority of the higher clergy supported him, Glemp had a difficult time convincing certain priests of his competence. In December 1982, for instance, at a meeting of 200 priests in Warsaw, Glemp was criticised for not taking a stronger stance against the regime.³³⁸ According to Michael Burleigh: “Glemp sat stony-faced as two hundred of them attacked his stance in the harshest terms”.³³⁹ The meeting, claims Burleigh, was “very stormy, difficult and painful” and gave Glemp “a lot to think about”.³⁴⁰ One possible explanation for Glemp’s political position and strategy is that he was influenced by his education. He received two doctor’s degrees in both canon and civil law.³⁴¹ His background could have influenced

³³⁴ Adam Bromke, “Socialism with a Martial Face,” *The World Today* 38, no. 7/8 (July-August 1982): 267.

³³⁵ “Jozef Glemp,” 2 February 2013.

³³⁶ Eric O. Hanson, *The Catholic Church in World Politics* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 224.

³³⁷ Serge Schmemmann, “Poland’s Bishops call for an end to military rule,” *The New York Times*, 28 February 1982.

³³⁸ “Priests in Warsaw,” *New York Times Abstracts*, 9 December 1982, 4.

³³⁹ Burleigh, 433.

³⁴⁰ “Polish archbishop attacked for failing to take strong line,” *The Globe and Mail*, 9 December 1982, 17.

³⁴¹ “Jozef Glemp,” 2 February 2013.

him, to a certain degree, to be more practical and realistic when dealing with the state authorities. Glemp would have realised that, in order for the Church to continue to exist, it would have to respond pragmatically to the situation in which it found itself.

Glemp was a particularly strong advocate of the cautious and restrained line of opposition. He realised the importance of this when concerns about a Soviet invasion came to the forefront. Many people were afraid that Soviet troops were massed on the Polish border and that they would invade if the political situation in Poland deteriorated still further. Glemp seems to have shared these fears, which is one of the reasons why he was so eager to persuade Poles not to resort to violence. In a sermon delivered at the Church of St. Stanisław in February 1982, Glemp argued that the Fatherland was sick and so “the church’s role is to contain anger and channel it into a search for national unity”.³⁴² In the view of historians Thomas Sancton, Wilton Wynn and Richard Honik, Glemp was attempting to “put moral pressure on the regime but avoiding inflammatory gestures that might incite violence and provoke a Soviet invasion”.³⁴³ From this perspective, Glemp regarded Martial Law as a “lesser evil”³⁴⁴ than the greater evil of Soviet invasion and occupation. Therefore, he regarded it as vital to prevent the outbreak of violence and ensure the Church refrained from doing anything that might either incite the population or provoke the Communist authorities.

The need to avoid bloodshed was a consistent theme in Glemp’s public pronouncements during the period of Martial Law. According to Paczkowski, Glemp was greatly concerned about the violence and begged the people to stop the bloodshed.³⁴⁵ In Warsaw on 25 April 1983, he cautioned the people by saying: “It is our duty to warn you against a danger, for whenever manifestations take place events not intended by the organizers may occur.”³⁴⁶ Almost a year prior to this sermon, Glemp had asked the Polish people to refrain from protests.

³⁴² Thomas A. Sancton, Wilton Wynn and Richard Honik, “Waiting for the Spring,” *Time*, 119 Issue 8 (02/22/1982): 34.

³⁴³ Sancton et al., 34.

³⁴⁴ Archie Brown, *The Rise and Fall of Communism*. (London: Bodley Head, 2009), 435-436.

³⁴⁵ Paczkowski, 213.

³⁴⁶ “Glemp Warns of Trouble in Solidarity Protests,” *The New York Times*, 26 April 1983, A7.

In January 1982, in a Sunday sermon, he said: “we repeat, with emphasis ... to protest [or] rebel may lead to fratricidal strife”.³⁴⁷

Glemp preferred to avoid using overly harsh words against the authorities. A typical example of Glemp’s cautious use of language is furnished by the comments he made during a canonization ceremony in 1982. In his sermon, Glemp made no comments that were overtly critical of the regime, but simply stated, in a mild tone, that the outlawing of Solidarity “brought him ‘distress’”.³⁴⁸ Glemp’s preference for conciliatory language can also be linked to his desire to open the channels of communication between the state, the Church and the people. He saw dialogue as an important tool for reconciliation during the Martial Law period and realised there could be no successful dialogue unless what he called the “invisible hatred” between the authorities and the people were removed.³⁴⁹ This meant that Glemp needed to maintain a position between the authorities and the people, holding on to the confidence of the latter whilst doing nothing irretrievably to alienate the former. Under the conditions of Martial Law, this balancing act was bound to be fraught with difficulties. As well as diffusing tension between society and Communism, Glemp wanted to open channels with Solidarity and provide a bridge between Solidarity and the authorities.³⁵⁰ But, despite supporting Solidarity, Glemp avoided using the word “solidarity” when referring to the movement.³⁵¹

Notwithstanding his relatively pacific nature, the portrayal of Glemp as weak and unwilling to criticise the regime is both incorrect and unfair. Glemp did sometimes make openly critical remarks about both the regime and Martial Law. For instance, during one sermon, delivered to farmers in Częstochowa in August 1982, Glemp argued for the right to free association. In Glemp’s view, the farmers should be permitted to “protect their interests and to defend their ‘human dignity’”

³⁴⁷ “The Polish Choice Defined,” *The New York Times*, 27 January 1982.

³⁴⁸ Kifner, “For Poland’s Church.”

³⁴⁹ Serge Schmemmann, “Poland’s Primate Urges New Talks,” *The New York Times*, 16 August 1982.

³⁵⁰ Schmemmann, “Poland’s Primate.”

³⁵¹ Paczkowski, 213-214.

because the entitlement to organise was a “natural right” for all men.³⁵² In 1983, Glemp also attempted to put pressure on Jaruzelski by petitioning him through letters and refusing to meet with him until his requests were taken seriously. Glemp wanted Jaruzelski to end Martial Law, announce an amnesty, and restore the jobs of those people who had been punished for political activity or allow them to return to their universities.³⁵³ In addition, Glemp also wanted the release of those who had been interned, the lessening of ideological pressure, and the re-legalisation of Solidarity. These measures, in Glemp’s view, would permit the continuation of the renewal of Poland that was started in August 1980. In one homily, in May 1982, Glemp condemned the violence used by the regime to suppress the demonstrations of youths. Glemp said: “stones are hardly arguments, but riot sticks are not educational implements”.³⁵⁴ He also wrote letters in defence of arrested individuals. In one letter, Glemp asked the authorities to release an internee, Leonard Szymanski, who he felt had been wrongfully imprisoned.³⁵⁵ In the case of other individuals who had been detained, Glemp argued that the authorities should not treat them as criminals. They deserved better treatment and conditions because their crimes were not as severe as murder or assault.³⁵⁶

Despite the fact that Glemp was relatively conciliatory towards the regime, he was also tolerant of those members of the higher clergy who took a more radical line. For example, he was close to Cardinal Macharski who, as we will see shortly, was far more openly critical of the Communist authorities than Glemp. In June 1983, for example, when Glemp travelled to Rome for an interview with the Pope to discuss the possibility of a papal visit to Poland, he chose Macharski to accompany him.³⁵⁷ Peter Stanford argued in his obituary to Glemp that, during Wyszyński’s time, any cleric who had tried to challenge his position had been

³⁵² Schmemmann, “Poland’s Primate.”

³⁵³ John Kifner, “Polish Primate Halts Farm Aid Talks,” *The New York Times*, 9 August 1983, A3.

³⁵⁴ Adam Bromke, “A Glimmer of Hope in Poland,” *The Globe and Mail*, 10 July 1982, 9.

³⁵⁵ Raina, 228.

³⁵⁶ Paczkowski, 214.

³⁵⁷ John Kohan et al. “Return of the Native,” *Time*, 6/27/1983, 121 Issue 26, 28.

relegated to a remote country parish.³⁵⁸ Glemp, in a similar fashion, tried to move Popiełuszko, but was blocked by the other clerics.³⁵⁹ Yet Glemp did not attempt to relegate Macharski to a less prominent position within the Church hierarchy. There is no indication that Glemp tried to shift any higher cleric for being outspoken against the regime. We cannot say for certain why he tried to block Popiełuszko but not Macharski. Perhaps one explanation could be that Glemp trusted the higher clergy to be more cautious in their public remarks than “turbulent priests” such as Popiełuszko.

Given the very problematic circumstances in which he found himself, it is difficult to see how Glemp could have fulfilled his role more effectively than he did. He was able to balance the competing demands placed upon him by the state, the population and the Papacy. When the period of Martial Law came to an end, the Church still enjoyed the loyalty of the vast majority of the Polish population. Yet the Church had also retained a working relationship with the regime. This achievement was of no small significance for it paved the way for the dialogue between the state and Solidarity which culminated in the round table agreements. The price that Glemp had to pay for this success was personal unpopularity. Moreover, during the period of Martial Law, Glemp had done his best to keep a lid on popular anger yet he also allowed priests to defend the human rights of their parishioners.³⁶⁰ At the same time as asking the population to stay calm, Glemp and his 500-member aid committee provided shelter to “harassed opposition members and their families” as well as allowing “Catholic churches to host independent groups and activities forbidden under the communist regime”.³⁶¹ According to Martin Child, writing in the *Independent* shortly after Glemp’s death in 2013: “Glemp’s tactics helped Poland through 18 months of harsh military rule and the economic struggles of the 1980s. Under his guidance, the church offered spiritual and material support to Solidarity activists and dissidents, many of whom

³⁵⁸ Peter Stanford, “Cardinal Jozef Glemp obituary,” *The Guardian* (25 January 2013) <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/24/cardinal-josef-glemp> (accessed 22 June 2014).

³⁵⁹ Stanford.

³⁶⁰ Catholic News Service, “Retired Polish primate, Cardinal Glemp, dies at 83” (24 January 2013) <http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/1300291.htm> (accessed 22 June 2014).

³⁶¹ Catholic News Service.

lost their jobs.”³⁶² Archbishop Cardinal Kazimierz Nycz honoured Glemp after his death by saying that he had been a leader in a difficult time and praised his prudence and wisdom.³⁶³ Though Glemp was frequently criticised at the time and subsequently for his alleged softness towards the regime, the more positive remarks that were made about him after his death represent a fairer assessment of his true contribution to the process of democratisation in Poland.

Higher clergy in opposition to Martial Law

It is true that the higher clergy sometimes stressed the importance of caution and moderation. One higher cleric who frequently cautioned against violence was Bishop Adam Dyczkowski of Wrocław. He told students to refrain from making and carrying banners which might provoke the authorities to confiscate them, because that might in turn lead to violence.³⁶⁴ Some members of the higher clergy were more concerned about the Church being overly political. Bishop Czesław Domin of Katowice felt that clergy who became involved in politics were endangering the rights that the Church had gained in Poland.³⁶⁵ He was fearful that, if the Church were too outspoken, it might be subjected to greater control by the state or be outlawed altogether. Bishop Tadeusz Rybak of Wrocław decided to be more discreet about his concerns and focused on the suffering of the laity. He used symbols to stress the suffering of women while under Martial Law. Rybak compared the mothers of Poland to Mother Mary and said that they were experiencing a hard life and no home, just like the Virgin Mary.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Martin Childs, “Cardinal Jozef Glemp: Priest who helped lead Poland from communism to democracy,” *The Independent* (29 January 2013) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/cardinal-jozef-glemp-priest-who-helped-lead-poland-from-communism-to-democracy-8470577.html> (accessed 22 June 2014).

³⁶³ Monika Scislowska, “Cardinal Jozef Glemp dead: ex-Polish Church head dies at 83” *The Huffington Post* (24 January 2013) http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/24/cardinal-jozef-glemp-dead_n_2543158.html (accessed 22 June 2014).

³⁶⁴ Informacja Dzienna nr 131/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 11 maja 1982 r, 11 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁶⁵ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 45.

³⁶⁶ Informacja Dzienna nr 129/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 9 maja 1982 r, 9 May 1982. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

However, as a group, the higher clergy were not less outspoken than the lower clergy. The division drawn in the literature between the higher clergy and lower clergy is misleading. As we saw in the previous chapter, many commentators have somewhat exaggerated the radicalism of the lower clergy. Similarly, there has been a tendency in the literature to underestimate the degree to which the higher clergy were critical of the regime's policies. There were many instances of higher clerics speaking out against the regime and Martial Law.

A good example of a high-ranking cleric who was sometimes openly critical of the regime was Cardinal Henryk Roman Gulbinowicz. Gulbinowicz was born 17 October 1923 in Szukiszki near Wilno which is now located in Lithuania. He grew up on the family estate in the Szukiszki village where he attended high school. In 1944, Gulbinowicz enrolled in the Metropolitan Seminary in Wilno before transferring to Białystok in 1945.³⁶⁷ He was ordained a priest in June 1950 and served as vicar and prefect of the primary schools in Szudziałowie. Gulbinowicz continued his studies at the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Lublin until 1955. After Gulbinowicz graduated with a doctorate, in moral theology and ethics, he ministered in Lublin University in Białystok. In this seminary, he served in various roles: prefect of studies (1960-1963), vice-rector (1963-1968), and finally rector (1968-1970).³⁶⁸ One month after he returned to Białystok, in February 1970, Wyszyński ordained Gulbinowicz as a bishop. He was appointed Titular Bishop of Acci and administrator of the Archdiocese of Wilno.

He was involved in the Wrocław archdiocesan synod and Labour Congress as well as founding many new parishes. In 1976, he became Archbishop of Wrocław. Between 1977 and 1987, Gulbinowicz was a professor of moral theology and the Grand Chancellor of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. In May 1985, he was appointed cardinal and named priest of the

³⁶⁷ Informacja Dzienna nr 70/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 11 marca 1982 r, 11 March 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁶⁸ Informacja Dzienna nr 70/82, 11 March 1982.

Church of the Immaculate Conception of Mary in Grottarossie.³⁶⁹ He took an active part in the work of the Polish Episcopate and had a seat on the Permanent Council of the Episcopate. Gulbinowicz was also a member of the Commission for the Pastoral Care of the General Commission for the Clergy, and the Commission for the Pastoral Care of Emigration. At the same time, he also took part in various Vatican congregations like the Congregation for the Clergy, for the Oriental Churches, and for the Evangelization of Peoples. In 2004, he was appointed Archbishop emeritus of Wrocław.

During the period of Martial Law, Gulbinowicz supported the laity and even performed masses specifically for internees.³⁷⁰ He also used prayer and sermons to express his support for the laity in much the same way as many members of the lower clergy. On 6 May 1982, for example, he prayed for freedom and peace to return to the country.³⁷¹ Like many of the priests discussed in the previous chapter, Gulbinowicz was against the removal of crosses from public spaces. In March 1982, he wrote a series of letters to the authorities to protest against the planned removal of a cross from a factory.³⁷² Gulbinowicz was hoping that his letters would prevent the removal from happening in the first place. While trying to help the laity, Gulbinowicz realised that the Church needed to remain united in its response to Martial Law. He did not want conflicting messages to confuse the people. It was important for the Church to be united in order to guide the people through the difficult situation.³⁷³

However, Gulbinowicz did not always adopt a conciliatory stance during the Martial Law period. He was described by historian Suzanne Hruby as being “frequently cited as [an] advocate of a more forceful line towards the military

³⁶⁹ David M. Cheney, “Henryk Roman Cardinal Gulbinowicz” <http://www.catholic-hierarchy.org/bishop/bgulb.html> (accessed 12 January 2014).

³⁷⁰ Informacja Dzienna nr 95/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 5 kwietnia 1982 r, 5 April 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁷¹ Grażyna Sikorska, “The Church in Poland under Martial Law,” *The Chronicle* (Summer 1982): 340.

³⁷² Informacja Dzienna nr 89/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 30 marca 1982 r, 30 March 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁷³ Informacja Dzienna nr 131/82, 11 May 1982.

regime.”³⁷⁴ For example, like many clergymen, Gulbinowicz had little regard for the state media. In May 1982, he said in Wałbrzych during a homily that he was not surprised to hear that the Polish people refused to watch televised media.³⁷⁵ He argued that the authorities should stop spreading propaganda which nobody believed but instead engage in constructive dialogue with the people.³⁷⁶ In a pastoral letter written in March 1982, Gulbinowicz emphasized that the regime was depriving citizens of their constitutional rights and that Poland suffered from a lack of freedom. Gulbinowicz added that the regime was only still in power because it was forcing the people to do what the Communists wanted.³⁷⁷

Gulbinowicz’s nuanced response to Martial Law was very similar to that of many lower clergy. But there were also higher clerics who, like the “turbulent priests,” took a more radical line. One example of a more outspoken higher clergyman was Cardinal Franciszek Macharski. Macharski was born 20 May 1927 in Kraków. During the Second World War, he worked as a menial labourer in the General Directorate of Monopoli and entered the seminary in Kraków in 1945. Macharski was ordained a priest in April 1950 and studied at the Theological Faculty of the Jagiellonian University. He then obtained his master’s degree in 1951. He became a vicar in the parish (Świętych Szymona i Judy Tadeusza) in Kozy near Bięsko-Biała until 1956. Afterwards, Macharski was transferred to Fribourg, Switzerland, where he continued his theological studies and later received his doctorate in Pastoral Theology in 1960/1961. Macharski returned to Kraków and became the spiritual director of the seminary there. From 1962-1978, he was the professor of pastoral theology and homiletics at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Kraków. He also held the position of assistant professor of pastoral theology at the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. Throughout his time in Kraków, Macharski was a member of the Committee for Press and Publications Catholic, a member of the Liturgical Commission, and a member of Leviticus.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁴ Susanne Hruby, “The Church in Poland and its Influence,” *Journal of International Affairs*, 36, no.2 (Fall/Winter 1982/1983): 327.

³⁷⁵ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 86.

³⁷⁶ Informacja Dzienna nr 24/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 24 stycznia 1982 r, 24 January 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 2.

³⁷⁷ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 38.

³⁷⁸ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 124.

Macharski had several leadership roles and committee positions throughout his time as a cleric. He served as President of the Commission of the Synod of the Archdiocese of Kraków for Pastoral-Social Science. He was also Vice-President during the Polish Episcopal Conference in the years of 1979-1994, chairman of the Committee on Science Catholic Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity, and the Team for Research Fellowships and Language. Marcharski was appointed Archbishop of Kraków in December 1948. He was then appointed a cardinal of San Giovanni a Porta Latina in June 1979. Macharski continued to be appointed to committees and councils, including the Commission for the Apostolate of the Laity, Commission for Seminaries, Committee on Justice and Peace, the Commission for the Pastoral Care of the General, the Synod of Bishops in Rome and the Permanent Council. Macharski retired as Archbishop of Kraków on 3 June 2005.

Macharski soon gained a reputation as an effective mediator between the state and the Church. He was described by Suzanne Hruby as having a talent for smoothing over conflicts between the two groups, which may explain why he was chosen for the Kraków position.³⁷⁹ Macharski frequently met with his friend, Jerzy Dabrowski, Bishop of Gniezno, for informal discussions about how the situation in Poland could be calmed.³⁸⁰ As with most within the Church, Marcharski's main concern was the safety of the people and he therefore felt that it was imperative to reduce the risk of violence. When the papal visit was being discussed, Macharski realised there was the possibility that it might not go ahead. As noted in chapter 1, the authorities were not at all enthusiastic about allowing the Pope to visit Poland at such a volatile time.³⁸¹ Macharski did his best to ensure that the trip went ahead by trying to allay the concerns of the authorities about the possible impact of the Pope's visit. He explained that the papal visit would in fact calm the situation, encourage dialogue between the state and the people, and

³⁷⁹ Hruby, 327.

³⁸⁰ Krzysztof Michalski, *Działalność Komisji Wspólnej przedstawicieli Rządu PRL i Episkopatu Polski 1980-1989* (Warszawa: Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, 2012), 83.

³⁸¹ Michalski, 111.

help improve the political climate.³⁸² In Macharski's opinion, the papal visit would lead to positive outcomes rather than violence. He hoped that, after the visit, Martial Law would end, the interned prisoners would be released and the situation in Poland would slowly begin to repair itself.³⁸³

Despite his diplomatic skills and his willingness, on occasion, to mollify the authorities, Macharski was also occasionally a fierce critic of Martial Law. He had been described by Hruby as an advocate of a more forceful line against the regime along with Gulbinowicz. As a result, he was targeted by the secret police in the hope that he would collaborate with them. This endeavour was futile as Macharski refused to cooperate with the SB despite their threats.³⁸⁴ According to Michalski, Macharski fervently defended the Church particularly when the authorities were attacking it. He used his sermons to respond back against the authorities when they accused the Church of being responsible for strikes and manifests.³⁸⁵ As far as Macharski was concerned, it was the Communists who were creating these strikes, creating fractures, and stirring up unrest among the people.³⁸⁶

Macharski not only publicly criticised the authorities, he even organised marches of clerics in the centre of Kraków.³⁸⁷ He did his best to pressure the regime to release the internees and award them an amnesty.³⁸⁸ Eventually, the authorities decided that they would release the internees with certain conditions. They would only release internees who had been accused of minor infringements, but those who had been charged with more severe crimes would have to remain in the camps.³⁸⁹ According to Michalski, Macharski felt that the regime was taking an anti-Church stance and creating problems for the clergy, particularly, in

³⁸² Michalski, 117.

³⁸³ Michalski, 131.

³⁸⁴ "Polish Catholic clergy and the Soviet-imposed secret police," *Sarmatian Review Data*, September 2007, 1321.

³⁸⁵ Michalski, 113.

³⁸⁶ Michalski, 135.

³⁸⁷ Michalski, 119.

³⁸⁸ Michalski, 119.

³⁸⁹ Michalski, 119.

bureaucratic terms.³⁹⁰ In 1982, the PZPR recorded that Macharski was particularly offended by the insinuation that the Church was attacking the state with its push to introduce crosses into schools. The document argued that he protested and disputed that it was not an attack on society or Communism.³⁹¹

In just the same way as more radical members of the lower clergy, such as Adolf Chojnacki and Jerzy Popietuszko, Macharski used sermons as a platform to voice his aversion to the authorities. For example, he publicly criticised the attempts of the Communists to force people to sign formal declarations of loyalty to the regime. In one sermon, Macharski offered his help to anyone who needed it, especially, in regards to legal matters. In 1982, the cardinal stated clearly:

A person who feels that he has been treated unfairly, should defend himself with the law, including the regulations of the labour law. If he does not know how to go about this, he should come to me and I will help him, and in doing so I will be giving a helping hand, not only to him and his family but also to the whole nation which wants to defend itself against the devastation cause to the victims by the desire for retaliation within them.³⁹²

Gulbinowicz and Macharski were by no means the only examples of higher clergymen who were openly outspoken. For example, in May 1982 Bishop Wincenty Urban of Wrocław who argued in the parish of St. John the Apostle in Olesnica during a Confirmation ceremony that the television and radio spouted lies because the authorities used them as propaganda.³⁹³ He went even further by criticising the restrictions that the authorities had placed on the movements of the Pope on his visit to Poland. This was an extremely sensitive topic, and Urban's willingness to broach it is striking. Urban asked why the Pope was not allowed to drive his "Popemobile" through the streets, as had become customary during the Pope's international visits. The regime informed him that there were

³⁹⁰ Michalski, 140.

³⁹¹ Informacja Dzienna nr 41/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 10 lutego 1982 r, 10 February 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

³⁹² *The Church in Poland under Martial Law*, (NSZZ "Solidarnosc" Information Office, London, 1983), 34.

³⁹³ Informacja Dzienna nr 139/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 19 maja 1982 r, 19 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

not enough security officers to allow the Pope to travel through the streets.³⁹⁴ Auxiliary Bishop Józef Benedykt Kurpas of Katowice was similarly unafraid to speak his mind. Like Urban (and Blachnicki), he argued that the media was filled with lies. He went so far as to encourage the people to turn off the late night news because it was a waste of time and destroyed families.³⁹⁵ Bishop Bednorz of Katowice used the annual pilgrimage to the shrine of Piekary Śląskie in 1982 as a platform to voice give expression to his views. During this pilgrimage, in front of 200,000 pilgrims, he insisted there be an end to arrests, detentions and dismissals based on political beliefs.³⁹⁶

Some members of the higher clergy publicly attacked the heavy-handed methods of the regime. Bishop Władysław Miziołek of Warsaw and Bishop Jan Michalski of Gniezno were particularly vocal in their criticisms of the army generals and the brutality of the police. For instance, they condemned an episode of police violence in March 1982 during which policemen had beaten people so badly that they suffered broken skulls.³⁹⁷ Bishop Ignacy Tokarczuk, of the Diocese of Przemyśl, used his sermons to express his displeasure with the regime. During a service in Częstochowa, he forcefully condemned the way that the police were attacking innocent people. “The Church”, Tokarczuk thundered, “cannot remain indifferent ... to the suffering and would have betrayed its mission [if it did so] ... thereby playing into the hands of those who are against God”.³⁹⁸ Tokarczuk also spoke harshly about the torments that young people endured. He described the situation as being “some sort of terrible myopia”.³⁹⁹

As we have seen, both Gulbinowicz and Macharski condemned the removal of crosses from public spaces. Other higher clergymen also spoke out on this issue. Bishop Stefan Barela of Częstochowa, for instance, described the removal of

³⁹⁴ Informacja Dzienna nr 147/83, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 26 maja 1983 r., 26 May 1983. Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2169_2.

³⁹⁵ Krawczak and Wilanowski 60.

³⁹⁶ Sikorska, 340.

³⁹⁷ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 38.

³⁹⁸ Jan de Weydenthal, Bruce Porter, Kevin Devlin, *The Polish Drama: 1980-1982* (Toronto: Lexington Books, 1983), 271.

³⁹⁹ *The Church in Poland*, 38.

crosses from schools as a form of abuse. In October 1982, he vehemently preached, "I protest against it. I strongly deplore that this is happening primarily in the Częstochowa region although other regions have also been affected. I express my deepest respect to the parents, teachers and children who had the courage to stand in defence of the cross, the sign of our faith."⁴⁰⁰ According to Bishop Bednorz of Katowice, the removal of crosses from schools represented an attempt by the Communist regime to turn Poland into an atheistic country. If successful, the Communists would destroy the homeland.⁴⁰¹ He expressed this view in letters that were read in churches throughout the Diocese of Katowice in March 1982. Bishop Antoni Adamiuk of Opole argued, in November 1983 in the Opole cathedral, that the regime had no right to force teachers to remove crosses from the classroom and that the regime's attempt to dechristianise Polish youth, if successful, would turn Poland into a land of no faith infested with bandits and thieves.⁴⁰² In January 1982, just one month after the imposition of Martial Law, the issue of the removal of crosses and crucifixes from public spaces was discussed at a two-day meeting of Polish bishops held in Warsaw. In a subsequent pastoral letter, which was read in all Polish churches on 24 January, the bishops demanded "full freedom for religious life" and condemned the removal of crosses.⁴⁰³

Was the higher clergy too conciliatory?

It is thus inaccurate to claim, as many have, that the higher clergy responded in too conciliatory a fashion to the imposition of Martial Law, or that there was a clear division between the response of the higher clergy and that of the lower clergy. Within the ranks of the lower clergy, there were indeed some exceptionally outspoken priests, and these are often held up in the literature as if they were representative of the lower clergy as a whole. Yet, when the response of the higher clergy is discussed in the literature, the primary focus is usually placed on the cautious attitude of Glemp and his reluctance to provoke the regime. This is

⁴⁰⁰ *The Church in Poland*, 41.

⁴⁰¹ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 21.

⁴⁰² Krawczak and Wilanowski, 232.

⁴⁰³ Serge Schmemmann, "Poland's Bishops."

contrasted – usually negatively – to the staunch anti-Communism of Wyszyński and Pope John Paul II. The numerous examples of the more outspoken comments of other higher clergymen, and even of Glemp himself, are usually overlooked. Moreover, higher clergymen had to take into account the wider implications of their comments and actions in a way that ordinary parish priests did not. As anthropologist Charlotte Chase argued at the time, the Church – as represented by the higher clergy – needed to strike a balance between the demands of the state and the needs of the people. Under the conditions of Martial Law, when Soviet invasion and civil war were real possibilities, the ability of the Church to mediate between the Party and the population was of crucial significance. According to Chase: “The Church cannot be used effectively to challenge the regime. If it were to do so explicitly, the delicate religious freedoms which took too many years to achieve would be lost. This risk is too serious to take.”⁴⁰⁴

Also, the Polish higher clergy suffer in comparison with the Pope. They often deferred to the Pope, which Stanford argued: “created [the impression] that the pope was the real ruler of the church in Poland, while Glemp was merely his local agent.”⁴⁰⁵ But what made this perception worse was the fact that the higher clergy were much closer to the authorities and therefore “cast in a more prudent role”.⁴⁰⁶ By contrast, John Paul II was in a much stronger position to criticise the regime. Not only was the Pope beyond the reach of the Communists, but he was also the representative of the entire Catholic Church and he could draw on vast reservoirs of public support. Yet even John Paul II often spoke in code and avoided provocative language. The Pope used the word *porozumienie* to describe what the Church wanted to achieve with the state. This word has a range of meanings from “understanding” or “agreement” to “mutual action” or “co-operation”.⁴⁰⁷ It is an ambiguous term which can also be explained as meaning

⁴⁰⁴ Charlotte Chase, “Symbolism of Food Shortage in Current Polish Politics,” *Anthropological Quarterly*, 56, no. 2 (Poland 1983): 76.

⁴⁰⁵ Stanford, 25 January 2013.

⁴⁰⁶ Stanford, 25 January 2013.

⁴⁰⁷ Bird, Thomas E. and Mieczyslaw Maneli, “The New Turn In Church-State Relations In Poland,” *Journal of Church and State*, 24, no.1 (Winter 1982): 48.

both “an international agreement” and “a private, mutual contract”.⁴⁰⁸ By using this term, the Pope was able simultaneously to confirm and deny the true meaning behind his stronger speeches. The Pope would also use the word “solidarity” in his sermons, a small gesture that showed he was supportive of the movement.⁴⁰⁹ In one instance, the Pope took a more direct approach and wrote to Jaruzelski. A few days after the imposition of Martial Law, the Pope wrote to the general in the following terms:

During the past two centuries, the Polish nation has endured great wrongs, and much blood has been spilled in the struggle for power over our Fatherland. Our history cries out against more bloodshed, and we must not allow this tragedy to continue to weigh so heavily on the conscience of the nation. I therefore appeal to you, General, to return to the method of peaceful dialogue that has characterized efforts at social renewal since August 1980. Even though this may be a difficult step, it is not an impossible one. It is demanded by the good of whole nation.⁴¹⁰

He also argued that the authorities needed to find a different way to implement control. While the Pope was more overt with his feelings towards the situation in Poland, he was no less vocal than the Polish clergy about the need to avoid violence.⁴¹¹

While the higher clergy were not as outspoken as specific (and unrepresentative) members of the lower clergy such as Chojnacki and Popietusko, they made their opposition clear. They provided leadership but not in a way that might have provoked an escalation of the situation. Journalist Kifner explained that the Church was “cast in the awkward and unwelcome position of attempting to mediate between the military authorities”.⁴¹² Because it was the only non-Communist public body permitted to exist under Martial Law, the continued autonomy of the Church was all the more important. It was the role of the higher clergy to preserve this autonomy, not just in the interests of the Church but for the

⁴⁰⁸ Bird, 48.

⁴⁰⁹ Andrzej Paczkowski, *Wojna polsko-jaruzelska: Stan wojenny w Polsce 13 XII 1981- 22 VII 1983* (Warszawa: Prószyński i S-ka SA, 2006), 214.

⁴¹⁰ Anthony Kemp-Welch, *Poland under Communism: a Cold War history* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 328-329.

⁴¹¹ Michael Walsh, *Pope John Paul II: A Biography*, (Fount, 1995).

⁴¹² Kifner, “For Poland’s Church, A New Relationship with the State,” *The New York Times*, 14 November 1982.

sake of the people. According to historian Konstanty Gebert, the stance adopted by the Church did cause controversy. He stated that some Catholic circles felt that it was “politically wise” for the Church to adopt a reasonable compromise and prevent bloodshed.⁴¹³ However, others felt that the Church was “unduly conciliatory and that their unfriendly attitude toward the underground was extreme”.⁴¹⁴ The higher clergy needed to balance some of the more radical calls. That meant that, while some of the bishops were calling for the end to Martial Law, others would indirectly tell people that they needed to be realistic about living alongside the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁵ Thanks in part to the balancing act performed by the Polish Church, there was no Soviet invasion, large-scale violence was avoided, and the rift between the regime and the people did not become so vast that later compromise became impossible. From this perspective, the course of action pursued by the Church during a difficult time in Polish history was remarkably effective.

The regime and the higher clergy

The authorities were more tolerant of the higher clergy than of the lower clergy. When individual members of the higher clergy, or the higher clergy as a whole, made strongly critical statements, the regime simply pressured those who had made these statements to withdraw them. Sometimes the authorities were successful. For example, when the General Council of the Episcopate drew up a strong statement against the authorities, the higher clergy withdrew it because of the pressure placed on Glemp by the regime.⁴¹⁶ For the most part, however, the authorities allowed the higher clergy to continue without too many restrictions. The regime realised that they needed the Church and its leaders to maintain peace. The spokesman for the government, Jerzy Urban, said in 1981: “the Government highly values all church statements which promote the establishment

⁴¹³ Konstanty Gebert, “An Independent Society: Poland Under Martial Law,” *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 15, no. 3 (Summer 1990): 365.

⁴¹⁴ Gebert, 365.

⁴¹⁵ Serge Schmemmann, “Poland’s Bishops call for an end to military rule,” *The New York Times*, 28 February 1982.

⁴¹⁶ Cardinal Jozef Glemp, “*The Telegraph* (24 January 2013) <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/religion-obituaries/9825172/Cardinal-Jozef-Glemp.html> (accessed March 2014).

in Poland of calm and of respect by citizens for the law and for the requirements of martial law.”⁴¹⁷ It is clear that the authorities needed the Church because the people had far more faith in it than in the Party or any other public institution.⁴¹⁸ The higher clergy realised that this gave them a certain degree of leverage, but only if they did not push the authorities too aggressively. This is why Church advisors stressed “there must be pressure but it has to be moderated”.⁴¹⁹ Members of the higher clergy also seem to have believed that, if the authorities felt threatened, they would be less likely to lift Martial Law.⁴²⁰

The regime was willing to have open discussions with the higher clergy. On occasion, these discussions even included representatives of Solidarity, including Watesa himself. Not all discussions went well and, on some occasions, the talks ended in stalemate.⁴²¹ Nonetheless, thanks in part to the mediation of the Church, the fragile thread of dialogue between the regime and Solidarity was never broken altogether.⁴²²

Though the authorities depended on the Church to calm the political situation in Poland, they were also determined to ensure that “any form of action by the Church or any initiative supported by it would not go beyond the strictly spiritual aspects of its mission”.⁴²³ But, even on those occasions when the relationship between the state and the Church were tense, the channels of communication between the regime and the higher clergy remained open.⁴²⁴ For instance, when the bishops pushed for an amnesty in preparation for the papal visit, the authorities remained tolerant of their demands. They did not simply crack down

⁴¹⁷ Pear, A8.

⁴¹⁸ Kifner, “For Poland’s Church, A new relationship with the state,” *The New York Times*, 14 November 1982.

⁴¹⁹ Christopher Bobinski, “Polish Church Manoeuvres in Subtle Game,” *The Financial Times*, 20 January 1982, 2.

⁴²⁰ Christopher Bobinski, “Poles Look Fearfully Towards Neo-Stalinist Future,” *The Financial Times*, 12 January 1982, 3.

⁴²¹ Bromke, “Socialism”, 267.

⁴²² Bromke, “Socialism”, 267.

⁴²³ de Weydenthal et al, 265.

⁴²⁴ “Informacja Dzienna nr 132/82, dot. i sytuacji w województwie wrocławskim w dniu 12 Maja 1982 r, 12 May 1982, Institute of National Remembrance, Wrocław WR_0_53_2166_1 cz 1.

on them as they did with the laity. The regime allowed the higher clergy to voice their requests and then the authorities raised their concerns about the visit.⁴²⁵

As well as being open to dialogue, the regime was willing on occasion to make concessions to the higher clergy. In the first chapter, the lifting of the curfew for Christmas Eve mass was mentioned. This was one example where the authorities were willing to compromise. As journalist Robert Pear noted, “[the church services] reflected the authorities’ apparent desire to reach an accommodation with Polish bishops, who have condemned martial law as an act of violence against human rights”.⁴²⁶ For some historians, like Hank Johnston and Jozef Figa, the “government’s use of the episcopate in time[s] of crisis suggests both the authority of the church and its moderating role”.⁴²⁷ So the regime was willing to make concessions with the Church, provided they ensured violence was kept to a minimum. Johnston and Figa’s remark suggests that, despite Martial Law, the regime was not able to enforce its rule without the assistance of the Church. At times, the higher clergy was disappointed with the response from the regime. In January 1982, for instance, members of the higher clergy were disheartened by a speech that Jaruzelski made which offered no constructive proposals for political settlement.⁴²⁸ A stalemate was forming at this time and the Church was becoming frustrated at the lack of progress of talks. However, while not all of these discussions had successful results, the fact they occurred was no small feat. At one stage, in April 1982, the higher clergy organised a document with proposals to be the new “social contract” between the people and the authorities. Included in the proposals was the promise to fulfil the agreements of August 1980. Unfortunately, Jaruzelski rejected the proposals and described them as “too far-reaching and unrealistic”.⁴²⁹ But he did allow the Church to continue its search for a way out of the crisis.

⁴²⁵ Hella Pick, “Pope to visit Poland in June,” *The Guardian*, 31 January 1983: 6.

⁴²⁶ Pear, A8.

⁴²⁷ Johnston and Figa, 43.

⁴²⁸ Christopher Bobinski, “Polish Church Fears Military Clash,” *The Financial Times*, 5 February, 1982, 32.

⁴²⁹ Sikorska, 339.

There were, however, instances of harassment and violence against the higher clergy. For example, clergy members were faced with difficulties and problems when filling out official forms.⁴³⁰ The authorities would also try to pressure the Church by withdrawing concessions. It was their hope that it would alter the behaviour of the clergy. Some of the attempts made by the regime included “unexpectedly stopping the work on a church under construction in Wrocław diocese and making the diocesan bishops responsible for the good behaviour of their priests”.⁴³¹ The obvious hope was that the higher clergy would have better control of their subordinates to prevent a more radical response. The authorities would then attack the bishops who did not control their priests.⁴³² However, these measures did not achieve all that the authorities had hoped. Premier Mieczysław Rakowski stated in an interview in the Party daily *Zycie Warszawy* (Warsaw Life) on 21-22 August 1982 that “fairly frequent cases of the pulpit and various meetings by some priests [were] being used for voicing openly anti-state slogans”.⁴³³ From this statement, we can infer that most of the bishops did not heed the regime’s plea. Some members of the higher clergy obviously felt that those priests who wanted to make outspoken comments against the regime should be permitted to do so.

There were also cases where the higher clergy faced violence and arrests from the regime. In one example, Bishop Barela of Częstochowa was in a crowd of young people that was attacked by ZOMO riot police with tear gas.⁴³⁴ Bishop Ryszard Karpiński of Lublin also experienced violence from the authorities. There were arson attacks on churches in his city, which, in his view, constituted evidence of a “resurgence of anti-religious sentiments of a force unheard of even during the occupation or Stalinism.”⁴³⁵ Bishop Janusz Edmund Zimniak of Katowice experienced internment and talked about the prisoners. He said that the internees were protesting in confinement of the poor treatment they were

⁴³⁰ Michalski, 140.

⁴³¹ Sikorska, 340.

⁴³² Michalski, 140.

⁴³³ Sikorska, 340.

⁴³⁴ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 153.

⁴³⁵ Timothy A. Byrnes, “The Catholic Church and Poland’s return to Europe,” *East European Quarterly*, 30, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 433.

receiving.⁴³⁶ While this violence is deplorable, it was relatively subdued in comparison to the experiences of some of the more outspoken members of the lower clergy.

Conclusion

The higher clergy was not as inactive as some of the literature would suggest. There are plenty of examples of the higher clergy, including Glemp, taking a strong stand against the imposition of Martial Law and the violations of human rights in Poland. If the higher clergy appear to be too conciliatory, it is because Glemp and other members of the higher clergy are compared to exceptional individuals. These men include, Wyszyński (who faced a different situation), members of the lower clergy such as Chojnacki and Popiełuszko (who were not representative of the whole) and the Pope (who, despite his strong position as the worldwide leader of the Catholic Church, often spoke in code and campaigned for peaceful solutions). If we accept the premise that the higher clergy were, at times, conciliatory, the strategy of balancing the demands of several conflicting groups (the state, the Polish population, and the papacy) proved to be effective. The higher clergy managed to provide opportunities for dialogue between these different groups. It is impossible to accurately identify the degree to which the strategies employed by the higher clergy helped to prevent a Soviet invasion and civil war. However, given the central importance of the Catholic Church in Poland, there is a strong *prima facie* argument that the Church was crucial in the Martial Law period. The role played by Glemp during the Martial Law period deserves special attention. While he was criticised both at the time by contemporaries and subsequently by historians, Glemp's position was the most difficult of all the higher clergy. He manoeuvred his way through Martial Law with expert skill, meticulously negotiating between the state, the people, Solidarity, the papacy and his own episcopacy. A few obituaries following Glemp's death have recognised his role in the democratisation of Poland. It is a pity that his contribution was not more widely recognised during his lifetime.

⁴³⁶ Krawczak and Wilanowski, 38.

Conclusion

The Catholic Church was a stabilising force under Martial Law for two reasons. Firstly, the Church was as determined as the Communist authorities to ensure that discontent did not lead to widespread violence. Its moral authority was so great that it was able to restrain the anger of the Polish people and channel them into more peaceful courses. Secondly, with Solidarity driven underground, the Church was the only entity available to provide communication between the Communist authorities and the Polish people. However, the role of the Church under Martial Law is complex and, in a way, contradictory. While helping to stabilise the political situation, it sustained and, to a degree, encouraged resistance. The Church's continued existence in Poland provided pockets of freedom for the lay people to escape the Communist system.

The relationship between the Catholic Church and Communist authorities was also complex and, sometimes, contradictory. While the authorities disliked the hold the Church had on the Polish people, they understood they needed the Church to contain unrest. There were times when the authorities would grant concessions to the Church by lifting curfews but, at the same time, they would offer the laity films to tempt them into staying home. The behaviour of the authorities towards the Church suggests that their underlying position was weak, despite the imposition of Martial Law. Rather than openly attacking or harassing priests, the Communists preferred to use covert means. With the higher clergy, the regime was much more lenient. In comparison to the lower clergy, the higher clergy enjoyed much more freedom and less violence from the regime. The attitude of the Church towards the regime was also contradictory. While the Church disapproved of Martial Law and openly criticised it, the clergy were wary of open confrontation with the authorities. The Catholic Church tried to maintain a balanced position. It condemned violence by the authorities but also called for calm from the people. The Church played mediator in order to keep channels of communication open between the regime and the people.

The hagiographical literature gives the impression that the lower clergy was the most radical section of the Church. However, that was not the case. It is true that, within the ranks of the lower clergy, there were a few high-profile individuals who represented the ideal of the heroic priest. But this heroic ideal was not representative of all priests. Most of the lower clergy were much more cautious about getting involved in politics. Some of the priests were primarily focused on carrying out their spiritual and pastoral duties. And yet, by fulfilling their tasks, these priests were blurring the boundaries between political and non-political. There was tension between the lower and higher clergy with some of the priests arguing that the bishops were not doing enough in their position. But it was Glomp's conciliatory nature that created the most strain. Certain priests felt that Glomp was too close to the authorities and not assertive enough like his predecessor. The literature frequently depicts the higher clergy as having been less radical as the lower clergy. This depiction is not accurate. There were several examples of bishops who were outspoken during the Martial Law period. Even Glomp, who was primarily cautious in nature, had his moments of criticism against the authorities.

Throughout the Martial Law period, different levels of the Church functioned in various ways. These numerous behaviours allowed the Church to respond very flexibly to the situation in Poland and send different messages to different audiences. The multi-layered nature of the Church was precisely what made it so important under Martial Law. Therefore, it is significant to examine the role that each level performed rather than lumping them together under the generic label of "the Church".

In short, the Catholic Church during the Martial Law period was both a stabilising force and an agent of resistance. Its unique position in Poland allowed it to both oppose the Communist regime and provide a voice of reason to quell the outbreaks of violence.

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