

The political role of the Catholic Church in Poland under Martial

Law, 1981-1983

Jessica Jocher

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Master of Philosophy

School of History and Politics, Discipline of History, University

of Adelaide

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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

