



Ryszard Ficek¹

A Realism of Survival: Stefan Wyszyński and the Post-War Political Transformation of Poland (1945–1956)

Abstract

The above article analyzes the socio-political thought and pastoral ministry of Stefan Wyszyński in the context of the Polish state's post-war political transformation. The author's interpretation of the source materials is intended to present the endeavor of Wyszyński in the complicated process of post-war political changes taking place in Poland at that time. The exploration of the above research will be based on analyzing source texts by the historical method consisting of historical facts and their reinterpretation by the inductive-deductive approach. Therefore, the above article's fundamental goal is to present the country's post-war socio-political situation and the Catholic Church's strategy in Poland, undertaken by Wyszyński. Presenting the significant influence of Stefan Wyszyński, who, on behalf of the Church in Poland, commenced to call on clergy to recognize and respect state authority, to cooperate in the reconstruction of the country, and to support all efforts to strengthen peace and mutual cooperation, will allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relations between the Church and the communist state in the period of the post-war political transformation of Poland.

Key words: Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, the People's Republic of Poland, the Catholic Church, political transformation, communist ideology, personalism.

1. Introduction

After World War II, Poland's geopolitical position changed significantly compared to the interwar period. The change of state borders, the deportation of people from the Eastern Borderlands of the

¹ Rev. Ryszard Ficek, S.T.D., Ph.D. — priest of the diocese of Rockville Center/NY, the moral theologian and political scientist, e-mail: rficek@optonline.net, nr ORCID: 0000-0001-5238-6767.

Second Polish Republic to the former German territories granted by the Soviet Union and Western Allies (Warmia, Pomerania, Western Lands with Lower Silesia), the seizure of power by activists from the Polish Workers' Party supported by the Soviet communists and Józef Stalin himself were a harbinger of a new order that was gradually taking shape in Poland. In other words, Poland was becoming a communist country.

For the communists, the main enemy, apart from the independent underground military groups, was above all the Catholic Church. To fight it, the Polish Workers' Party, transformed in December 1948 into the Polish United Workers' Party, used the structures of state administration – initially the Ministry of Public Administration, and later the Office for Religious Affairs and the repression apparatus established in 1950, which, despite several transformations, Renaming and internal structure changes remained the primary tool for deconstructing, combating and destroying the Catholic Church, its structures, property, activities, and pastors. The decision-making center of all communist actions against the Catholic Church was a staff member of the Central Committee of the Polish Workers' Party/Polish United Workers' Party, known as the “Commission for the Clergy.” The communists, who sought to seize power in Poland, did not hide that it would be a secular state with Marxist-Leninist ideology modeled on the Soviet Union. Such a model of the state excluded the public activity of religious organizations, associations, and societies – especially the Catholic Church, membership of which included the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Second Republic of Poland – the existence of Catholic kindergartens, primary schools, vocational schools, high schools, and universities, theological faculties at universities, days off work and study during holidays participation of clergy and religious in public life, during official meetings with representatives of state authorities (Fijałkowska 1999: 8–10; Łatka, Marecki 2017: 37–41, 44–45).

In this context, many conservative observers of the post-war political scene in Poland, together with Wyszynski, were afraid that another perilous era could come. They were anxious about the perspective of *modus vivendi*: dangerous cooperation between the communist state and the Catholic Church (Żaryn 1998: 199). After the end of the war, many representatives of independence and conservative circles hoped that the post-war balance of power in Europe based on the provisions of the Teheran (1943), Yalta (February 1945), and Potsdam Conferences (July-August 1945), which led to the division of Europe into two zones of political influence, would not last long. The conflict between the West and the Soviet Union was expected to escalate and,

consequently, even lead to the outbreak of World War III. However, Stefan Wyszyński became the Primate when it was already known that communism would not be just a short episode in Poland's history. Moreover, fewer and fewer Poles believed that Western powers' intervention would liberate Poland from the sphere of Soviet influence (Łatka 2013: 201–211).

Nevertheless, Wyszyński, as well as Primate August Hlond, thought about settling relations with the communist state. Therefore, during Hlond's lifetime in 1948, the idea of establishing a church-government commission to solve the joint problems on the church-state line had been formed. Still, it was implemented a year later by Wyszyński. The common concept of both Primates was the conviction underlying that the Church, by her very essence, was sent to preach the Gospel to people living in all systems and under all socio-political conditions (Bączek 2001: 59).

2. Marxist-Leninist Ideology from the perspective of Stefan Wyszyński's Personalistic Socio-Political Thought

From what Wyszyński wrote about communism before the war, as well as what he said about its essence right after the war, it was clear that he would be a fervent opponent (Wyszyński 1937: 466–478; Nitecki 1982: 62–65). However, the dispute he had had with the communist authorities was not political but ideological. After all, at stake was the safety of millions of Catholics and respect for their rights. Nevertheless, this entire idea had been seen differently by the communist authorities, for whom anyone who opposed socialism, as well as its principles, was a class opponent and a political enemy who should be eliminated. The seriousness of the situation was evidenced by the fate of Wyszyński's contemporary representatives of the Catholic Church in the Eastern Block: Josef Beran (Archbishop of Prague), Cardinal Aloysius Viktor Stepinac, Primate of Croatia, or Cardinal József Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary (Kaczmarek 2002: 30–33; 42–49; Neja 2003: 239–242).

On the other hand, as a realist, Wyszyński, brought up in respect for the state and following the social teaching of the Church, accepted the new post-war form of state life of the Polish nation. Thus, he did not condemn the post-war changes in the socio-economic structure of the country directly. On the contrary, he believed that "Catholics have no reason to defend capitalism based on 'extreme egoism' and causing a lot of social harm" (Wyszyński 1990b: 991). Moreover, he thought that the

reconstruction of the pre-war social structure was necessary (Łatka 2013: 201–211). “In Poland, there was no lack of social forces – both among clergy as well as laity – who were spiritually prepared to rebuild the system. If not for atheism, which often takes on the dimensions of religious struggle, Polish society, with its cultural, historical democratism, would be the most thankful field of work for a stable government” (Wyszyński 1982b: 23–24).

As Wyszyński pointed out, the most severe problem of Marxist-Leninist ideology was its “bizarre anthropology.” In particular, Communists have developed a very “peculiar” concept of the human person (Wyszyński 1993: 46–47). Unlike traditional philosophical concepts, Marxism did not consistently refer to one vision of a human being, but it had tried to reconcile different, often incoherent, ideas about the human being. From this point of view, Marxist anthropology bears the mark of syncretism, which seems to be its main disadvantage (Albert, Hahnel 1981: 68–85; Безансон 1998: 47–58).

As a result, it is accused of Marxist tribalism and a collective vision of a society, which has very negative consequences for understanding the individual’s role in socio-political life. In other words, according to this system, the individual is “nothing” or “nobody,” while the social group is “everything.” In this sense, no other ideology than Marxism carries such a comprehensive picture of universal history, forms such a detailed outline of the past, nor demands such resolute action on its behalf. Besides, no other ideology is as mythological and myth-making as Marxism-Leninism. Moreover, no other ideology wants to rule so over the entire social reality (Wyszyński 1993: 93).

It is no wonder then that Wyszyński opposed the Marxist-Leninist materialistic ideology and considered it the greatest threat to Christianity. Moreover, materialism rejects any spiritual dimension in social life (ibid.: 46–47). Thus, it is a progressive deviation from the supernatural, spiritual, and religious realm that only recognizes a reality that can be grasped by sensual experience. Therefore, Wyszyński accused this materialistic ideology of blinding people, detachment from spiritual values, and eventually separating from the supernatural and eternal realm (ibid.: 47).

It is incredibly decisive in the face of totalitarian systems, which, in the name of man, undertook a fight with God. Only such a vision of man and society, which has its roots in God who is Love, can save a man and give back meaning to life and activities. In Christianity, the human person, as the integral unity of matter and spirit, utters her attitude to the world. It is expressed in multiple and complicated relationships with the surrounding social reality. However, none of them can satisfy the

complex and diverse needs of man, as soon as the right reference to another human being as an individual and community. This openness determines the potentiality of human existence, as well as the abilities and possibilities of his development, transcendence, and improvement (Wyszyński 1990c: 576).

3. Towards New Challenges

During the communist “enslavement,” Primate Wyszyński was aware of the seriousness of the Polish state’s situation. Over time, this realism became a kind of “political doctrine” of the Church, consistently implemented throughout the entire period of the People’s Republic of Poland. The above doctrine emphasized that the Church should not fight against the state as an institution but against its fundamental ideological assumptions and suppositions (Ficek 2020a: 282–286; Łatka 2020: 203–218). Therefore, Wyszyński, when he took the Office of the Primate, did not intend to act as the leader of the political opposition fighting against the communist state. The Primate was even irritated when – sometimes – he was called an *inter-rex*. It applied to the First Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1454–1795), where, during the “interregnum,” the “*inter-rex*” had to take the lead over the nation. Nevertheless, with time – perhaps even against himself – the Primate became an authentic *inter-rex*: the only recognized authority in the Republic.

Therefore, Primate Wyszyński, as the leader of the Catholic Church in Poland, perceived the need to change the structures of public life in the country but did not consider it to be the primary and immediate task of the Church. Nor did he feel that he was called to change the political regime. His criticism primarily concerned the anthropological and moral dimensions of social life. However, the Primate was aware that the state’s political system’s critical elements would be necessarily changed if there were an appropriate moral order. He has repeatedly spoken of a “social disposition” that would favor just social transformation. Although this social disposition – in his opinion – should be based on the Christian religion’s canvas, which aims to change the human heart (metanoia). In this way, changed people become the right subject and base for the proper shaping of the common good (Ficek 2020b: 39–61).

During the Stalinist repression, however, relations between the state and the Catholic Church were dominated by communists’ decisive activity aimed at the total destruction of the Church as an institution.

Already on September 12, 1945, the “Provisional Government of National Unity” adopted a resolution annulling the concordat concluded on February 10, 1925. Anti-church activities intensified during the Stalinist period when the goal of state authorities was to destroy the Church. Despite the apparent successes of the communist regime, the Church retained her position in society. Therefore, the new Poland’s rulers changed their tactics, which was directed at taking control of the Church and gradually influencing her activities.

In this context, the Primate’s concept of state-Church mutual relations indicated the necessity of reciprocated cooperation based on the principles guaranteeing the implementation of the Polish *raison d’état*. In other words, “the inherent necessity for both communities is cooperation for the benefit of citizens” (Wyszyński 1990a: 11). Characteristic for the early period of the Republic was the Primate’s and bishops’ rejection of active participation in politics and emphasizing their incompetence on this level. At the same time, lower-ranking clergy were allowed to operate in it. That was the case after the Primate’s arrest (1953–1956). When the episcopate was pacified, the parish became the refuge of resistance.

Simultaneously, in all the opposition movements, the clergy of the Catholic Church could be found. It should be emphasized that if it had not been for the episcopate’s support, it would have certainly not been possible to implement their intentions for individual clergymen involved in the opposition activity. In addition to the clergy’s direct support, the political opposition was also helped by making church buildings available for meetings, financial or material support. This situation meant that despite the episcopate’s political neutrality, the Church became the opposition’s mainstay. Mass presence at religious ceremonies was an expression of not only faith but also a manifestation of resistance to those in power in the People’s Republic of Poland (Łatka 2019: 569–592).

4. Ruthless Efforts to Subordinate the Catholic Church to Communist State’s Authority

As early as September 12, 1945, the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government of National Unity stated that the Concordat between the Holy See and the Republic of Poland concluded on February 10, 1925, ceased to apply. Furthermore, several other unfounded accusations had been made against the Catholic Church (Mezglewski

1998: 325–341). In turn, on September 25, 1945, the Council of Ministers, as was mentioned above, adopted decrees on marriage law and civil status files, which, among others, required the obligation of getting married only in front of a civil registrar. On the other hand, a “church marriage”, according to the interpretation of the Minister of Justice, could only take place before or after the signing of the state marriage certificate (Dola 1979: 194).

The next step striking the sovereignty and pastoral activity of the Church was the publication of the decree on freedom of conscience and the decree on the amendment of specific provisions of the law regarding the Christian associations (August 5, 1949). In this case, the state authorities carried out the registration of religious communities, making their further existence dependent, among other conditions, on presenting a list of members, demonstrating the status of immovable property, a list of religious authorities, and legislation (constitutions, statutes, decrees, etc.). In the event of failure to comply with formalities, there was a risk of liquidating religious houses, depriving agricultural assets and farms, as well as eliminating their own hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, and kindergartens (Marecki 2005: 76–113; 2009).

A spectacular undertaking on the part of the communist authorities was the liquidation of the church structures of the charity organization „Caritas” in the first two months of 1950 and the takeover of this institution under its own secular management, which was initially named the „Catholics Association Caritas”. The new „Caritas” was constituted on January 30, 1950, during the First National Council of the Catholic Association „Caritas”, and included secular activists appointed by the communists and clergy who relied on state authorities. Gradually, communist authorities removed the nuns from their former nursing homes and kindergartens operating under the auspices of the „new” Caritas. In particular situations, the communist government attempted to convert and persuade them to cooperate, and – only under this condition – leaving them in their former positions. At the same time, nuns were also removed from hospitals and sanatoriums, despite enormous staff shortages. Some hospital departments had to stop working, postpone treatments, and surgeries due to the lack of competent staff, composed of professionally trained nuns (Dudek, Gryz 2006: 49).

To extend the administrative control over the Catholic Church, the “Office in charge of Denominations” was established on April 19, 1950, which was subordinate to the First Secretary of PZPR as a unit of state administration with appropriate voivodship components (Department in charge of Denominations of the Presidium of Provincial National Council –

WRN) and the municipal (Noszczak, 2008). On January 18, 1951, even some Christian holidays were abolished: The Feast of the Presentation of the Lord, commonly called Candlemas (February 2), Ascension of the Lord, the second day of Pentecost, Saints Peter and Paul (June 29), the Immaculate Conception of the Holy Virgin Mary (December 8) and the holiday of May 3, as non-working days (Dola 1979: 205). Officially, it was motivated by the need to quickly rebuild the country from war damage and acquire new means of production.

In the summer of 1952, many schools, boarding schools as well as dormitories run by the church institutions were liquidated. The most severe was the liquidation of Minor Seminaries and the takeover of their property to the Treasury (July 3, 1950). As a result, many scientific institutions, laboratories, exercise rooms, libraries as well as their equipment were destroyed. The dorms and boarding houses, taken over by the school superintendents, were very quickly devastated. By liquidating the Minor Seminaries, the communist authorities sought to deprive the Major Seminaries of appropriate candidates, thereby significantly reducing the number of clergies. At the same time, secular authorities took over many kindergartens run by religious communities and dioceses (Marecki 2009: 135–164).

Similarly, sanatoriums and hospitals run by convents and religious congregations (mostly by female communities) were also “nationalized”. The voivodship authorities’ administrative decisions carried out these activities without the possibility of appealing or bringing cases to the appropriate court. Administrative actions were immediately accompanied by the seizure of property or its devastation, as well as taking over food supplies.

Another method of administrative destruction of the church, clergy, religious, and faithful communities was to impose administrative penalties on parishes and tax deductions for clerics. The income of individual parish pastors and parochial vicars, and even priests who were not employed in pastoral care, was determined according to the Department for Religious Affairs norms. Revenue, officially called *iura stole* (i.e., most often financial donations made by parishioners for religious services, including the administration of the sacraments and funerals), as well as Sunday contributions, were estimated – usually – overstating the rates. Defying the payment of the most excessive amount was associated with high fines plus interest and asset sequestration. These actions led to the financial ruin of the parishes and monasteries. Interestingly, in the early 1960s, taxes, and penalties were often higher than buildings' value (Kała 2004: 179–207).

As a result of actions destroying the material foundations of the Catholic Church, she was seized of approximately 95 percent of the land, almost all publishing houses and other facilities that served to maintain the clergy, conduct school, as well as other social and charitable activities (Pater 2004: 127–131). On March 9, 1953, the State Council issued a decree on the conferring and filling of church offices by state authorities, as well as the cancellation of these offices, which was contrary to the norms of canon law (Dola 1979: 208).

Moreover, the gradual removal of religion from various schools began. Initially, the state authorities limited the activity of catechists, marginalizing their actions, treating religious education as optional extra-curricular classes. Ultimately, however, it was decided to introduce a communist school model with the “secular”, in which „at the request of parents,” there was no religion at all (Konopka 2005: 135–144). Non-school days were abolished during Lenten retreats for students. Catechists were removed under the guise of a lack of appropriate pedagogical or university education, or even moral factor. The secularization of schools was carried out in individual regions of the country and at different educational system levels.

By resolution of the Council of Ministers of August 11, 1954, which entered into force on October 31, theological faculties at the Jagiellonian University and the University of Warsaw were liquidated without consulting the church authorities. In their place, the secular authorities established the Academy of Catholic Theology in Warsaw. The teaching program and lists of people employed at the newly established university were fully controlled and approved by state factors. However, the church authorities did not have any influence on this. Catholic publishing houses and the press were abolished, gradually reducing paper allocation and introducing censorship restrictions (Dola 1979: 209–210).

Pastors from the army, hospitals, sanatoriums, and prisons were gradually removed. The Field Ordinariate (Ordynariat Polowy) was made up of priests mostly cooperating with the communist regime, often derived from the – alleged – “patriot priests.” However, their activities in the military structures were instead a puppet and propaganda (Bankowicz 1996: 5–24). There was also a ban on organizing public processions, especially at the Corpus Christi celebrations and even funeral services on roads and in public squares. Those who violated the law were punished through administrative proceedings by penal-administrative courts (kolegium karno-administracyjne) operating under National Councils (Marecki 2009: 395–426).

Moreover, the communist administration tried to remove all religious emblems from public places. Under the guise of widening roads, creating additional lanes or pedestrian squares, roadside chapels and crosses were removed. At the same time, religious songs, as well as theological and biblical themes, were gradually removed from radio programs. The so-called secularization of school programs and textbooks was held, and the campaign of profiling the luminosity of public libraries. Propaganda and the glorification of atheism were dealt with by members of the Polish United Workers' Party (PZPR) and activists of the pre-war "Association of Polish Free Thinkers". Their activities in 1957 led to the establishment of the "Association of Atheists and Freethinkers". It aimed at the secularization of Polish society by popularizing knowledge about religion, creating Polish secular culture and secular ethics as well as spreading a "rationalist" and materialistic world view. Moreover, the association organized numerous lectures, conferences, and – alleged – "scientific sessions", during which atheism, a secular lifestyle, Marxists' materialistic worldview was promoted, religion was criticized, and "clericalism" was threatened.

Along with destructive activities directed at the Catholic Church as an institution, many attacks aimed at the Catholic hierarchy and episcopal curia were carried out (*Aparat bezpieczeństwa...* 2009). The list of actions of the then state authorities and party leaders is significant. Soon after the end of the war, communists imprisoned Bishop Josaphat Kocyłowski, the Greek Catholic ordinary from Przemyśl (1876–1947). In an „act of mercy”, he was deported from the country. As a result, Bishop Kocyłowski died in exile in Chapayivka near Kyiv (Iwaneczki 2007: 1–2).

However, the most burdensome and fraught with consequences was removing administrators from the Polish Western and Northern Territories (January 26, 1951) and replacing vicars general from the clergy with those loyal and subordinate to the state authorities (Dola 1979: 205). The communist establishments had made it impossible to perform the functions of administrators in Gdańsk (Andrzej Wronka), Gorzów (Edmund Nowicki), Opole (Bolesław Kominek), Olsztyn (Teodor Bensch), and Wrocław (Karol Milik) (Zieliński 2003: 97).

5. The Church's Response:

Do not Slander the Sacred Tenets of the Nation

The church authorities responded with the election of Chapter Vicars to the removal of legitimate administrators. This resulted, unfortunately, in a dual power functioned in many dioceses. The communists aimed at

creating chaos and, as a result, introducing priests cooperating with the communist regime to the vacant positions.. The ordinary of the Katowice Diocese, therefore, Bishop Stanisław Adamski (1875–1967), was removed in November 1952 (Rezler 1994: 729), Similarly, the administrator of the Archdiocese of Krakow, Archbishop Eugeniusz Baziak (1890–1962). The communists also excluded from the dioceses their suffragans (Terlecki 2006: 30–43).

On January 20, 1951, the ordinary of Kielce, Bishop Czesław Kaczmarek, was arrested and accused of collaborating with the Nazis during World War II. During his detention, Kaczmarek was physically and mentally tortured as well as subjected to illegal medical procedures involving psychotropic drugs. Moreover, his trial was publicized in the official media. On September 22, 1953, Bishop Kaczmarek was sentenced to 12 years in prison and lost his citizenship and public rights for five years. Released on February 8, 1955, he was arrested again almost a year later, February 3, 1956 (Śledzianowski 1991).

Nevertheless, the Catholic Church made a significant effort to conduct normal pastoral, charitable, and social activities. Despite war damage, loss of property, migration, and deportation of a large part of the diocesan, religious and faithful clergy from the Eastern Lands, soon after the end of the war, reactivation of all areas of the Church's activity began. Old pre-war publishing houses and new pastoral centers started to work. New magazine titles have appeared („Tygodnik Powszechny”, „Tygodnik Warszawski”, „Dziś i Jutro”, „Przegląd Powszechny”, as well as monthly „Znak”, and Caritas). Catholic education also began to function again, and the Polish Bishops' Conference resumed its activity. The revival of spiritual life was marked by numerous central actions, including pilgrimages to national sanctuaries gathering millions of faithful. Caritas restarted numerous charity campaigns, including many camps and centers for children and youth, as well as sobriety activities. The episcopate also reactivated the “Central Office of the Apostolate of the Sick” (Dola 1979: 192–203).

Nonetheless, a campaign of defamation of the interned Primate and the other hierarchs was carried out in the press as well as on the radio. However, actions that compromised the clergy were not limited to defaming bishops. Various activities were carried out by parish clergy and religious communities (Nosiński 1982: 319–370). In the post-war period, over 2,500 priests were in custody and prisons. Only in the years 1951–1956, they were 900 such convictions, most of them were accused of cooperating with the underground guerrillas and the “Home Army”, acting against the USSR and the Red Army, working for Nazi Germany

(Ligarski 2005: 56–66) “collaborating” with the „Freedom and Independence” and “National Armed Forces”. Several hundred nuns and friars were severely harassed because of their origin, native language, nationality, or religion. Subsequently, they had to leave Poland (Żaryn 2003: 67–68).

Intimidation, introducing an atmosphere of uncertainty, providing false information about the hierarchy's activities were on the daily schedule. Armed robberies against rectories, priests, and members of religious organizations were simulated. Fake news was disseminated about the fate of those detained by Secret Service (UB) officers or military intelligence. It was often reported that they left their jobs arbitrarily and fled abroad as politically discredited persons.

In this case, however, the communists' direct action regarding the clergy's environment was to break their unity. In September 1949, on the initiative of the government, the Association of Veterans of Struggle for Freedom and Democracy (ZBOWiD) established the so-called “Committee of the Priests” (Wawrzyniak 2009). The pro-communist organization “Priest-patriots” was to introduce a split among the clergy. This purpose was served by the Priests' Commission's appointment at the ZBOWiD on 12 January 1950. Initially, the Priests' Commission's membership was conditioned by the certified concentration camp prisoners or military veterans' past. However, in March 1950, it was accepted that every priest could become a member of this organization. There was only one condition: such a priest had to „express a positive attitude towards People's Poland.” So-called “priest-patriots” also acted in – inspired by PAX – the provincial commissions of the “Committee of Intellectuals and Catholic Activists” (Bober 2008).

In 1953–1955, the so-called „progressive clergy” had developed their activities as a part of the National Committee of the National Front. Only the loyal, “progressive” priests were considered to build the Church's hierarchy in Peoples' Poland in the future (Grajewski 1999). A very acute problem was the limitation of contacts between hierarchs and religious superiors with the Holy See and central religious authorities outside the country. Passports were refused for those seeking to leave the country, and visas were denied to general superiors and ecclesiastical supervisors living abroad. The communist censorship treated internal bulletins and regulations as non-debit publications. As a result, all religious correspondence was a subject of censorship by the appropriate security apparatus department.

One of the elements of destroying the clergy was the creation of a network of confidants from priests and religious figures. In the 1950s,

most of such informers were obtained by blackmail, breaking consciences, and intimidation. In this way, the communists sought to gain access to information about the hierarchy and clergy, pastoral plans, economic and charitable activities of church institutions, as well as its intentions in the field of social initiatives. The informers also tried to influence the Church's behavior in these areas of activity. In the end, this was to lead to taking full control over the clergy, limiting the „independence” of the Catholic Church in Poland from the Holy See, building a hierarchy dependent on the communists, and gradually destroying the Catholic environment (Gryz 1999: 287–310).

When presenting mutual state-church relations in the Stalinist period, one should ask the question, did these institutions really cooperate with each other at that time, or did they merely simulate a kind of cooperation?

From the end of the war, the bishops individually, as well as the entire episcopate, addressed numerous letters, petitions, and reminders to the communist administration regarding the right of Catholics to ordinary existence and respect for their civil rights. In other words, the bishops, despite the unilateral breaking of the concordat by the communists, sought the normalization of mutual relations (Grześkowiak 2004; Fijałkowska 1999).

6. Endeavors to Normalize the Mutual Relations and “*Non Possumus*”

Primate Stefan Wyszyński played a unique role in this field. He determined that, in 1949, a “Mixed Commission of the Government and Episcopate” was established. On April 14, 1950, an agreement was signed between the episcopate and the communist state through negotiations. From a later perspective, it turned out that this was an unprecedented agreement not only on a national scale but also internationally. Nevertheless, it was the first agreement of the Church with the authorities of the communist bloc. As primate Wyszyński predicted, the agreement was to create a *modus vivendi* of the Church in socialist reality. The government-guaranteed (which it did not, however): 1) teaching religion in schools; 2) pastoral care in the army, prisons, and hospitals; 3) the existence of the Catholic University of Lublin and theological faculties in Krakow and Warsaw; 4) the Church's right to charitable activity (Żaryn 1997: 116–133).

For its part, the Church undertook: 1) to call on the clergy to respect the government and to cooperate in the reconstruction of the country; 2) make efforts at the Holy See to stabilize the church administration in the Regained Territories; 3) support all efforts to consolidate peace (Dola 1979: 2003–2004). In retrospect, Primate Wyszyński wrote in his book “Zapiski więzienne” (*Prison records*) under the date of September 13, 1953: “Why did I bring about an „Agreement”? I have been from the beginning – and I am still – of the opinion that Poland, and with it the Holy Church, lost too much blood during the Nazi-German occupation that it could afford its other passing. (...) The leadership of the episcopate had to deal with the affairs of the Church „in Polish reality” in such a way as to spare her new losses. However, so that this conflict does not find us unprepared, we need to have time to strengthen our power to defend God's position” (Wyszyński 1982b: 31–32).

In retrospect, it seems that during the Stalinist period, the Church repeatedly attempted to cooperate with the state authorities, sought to normalize relations, and even signed an appropriate agreement (April 14, 1950). However, it turned out that the communists were playing their own game to oust the Church from social life and depriving it of the function of a „voice of conscience” in national and state matters (Dominiczak 2000). In a letter to the President of the People's Polish Republic (PRL) and the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Communist party, Bolesław Bierut, of May 8, 1953, the Primate wrote: “Over the years, the Church has been deprived of most of her things necessary for ordinary life and development of useful as well as absolutely essential things which she had in Poland and which she has had elsewhere. It is enough to mention here the nationalized estates, houses, charities „Caritas”, foundations, fraternities, societies, hospitals, schools, orphanages, nurseries, printing houses, publishing houses, and newspapers (...). Moreover, suppose it were to happen that external factors would prevent us from appointing competent as well as experienced people to the ecclesiastical positions. In that case, we are determined not to fill them at all rather than to entrust religious rule of souls to unworthy hands (...). Let us follow the voice of our apostolic vocation and priestly conscience, walking with inner calmness and the awareness that we did not give the slightest reason for persecution, that suffering becomes ours not for anything else, but only for Christ and Christ's Church. We must not put God's things on Caesar's altars. «Non possumus» (Bartos 2001: 159–163).

As was proposed by Julia Brystygier and Ivan Sierov, the initial attempt to destroy the Catholic Church was replaced around 1953 by

a program of taking control over her and pushing her to the „porch”. So, the depreciating propaganda made a lot of effort to display no room for the Catholic Church in socialist People’s Poland. Many attempts were made to show by the then depreciating propaganda that there was no Catholic Church in socialist People’s Poland. Over the years, however, the persecuted Church had become robust, intense, and resistant to the actions of the communist authorities. Paradoxically, she was reinforced and strengthened by repression and persecution. Therefore, the Church, not the communist regimes, came out victorious from the long clash and struggle.

7. Conclusions

Primate Wyszyński stated during his ingress to the Warsaw cathedral that he did not want to be a politician but only a shepherd. The challenges he faced, however, thwarted that intention. In one of his statements, Wyszyński said: “Let’s remember what the 20th century means for a human being. After all, this is the age of totalistic regimes that organized a cruel government system oriented against its own citizen” (Wyszyński 1977: 251). Nonetheless, his words were directly related to the Church, Poland, and Poles’ personal experience. Wyszyński as a statesman and, at the same time, the helmsman of the Catholic Church in Poland, in his service as a politician, was guided by the desire to preserve the Nation’s living strength. Nevertheless, the realities of life in People’s Poland repeatedly confronted the ideals of the “proclaimer of the Good News,” referring to Christian personalism’s values with the prose of everyday life funded by the Marxist-Leninist ideology and the then system of political power.

The actions taken by Cardinal Wyszyński were all the more dangerous because the fate of most bishops in the areas controlled by communism was quite similar. When confronted with the brutal machine of the communist state, which was deliberately fighting religion, most bishops either succumbed to repression by giving in to pressure or resisted, for which they often had to pay the price of many years in prison or exile. Primate Wyszyński also did not escape persecution. Nevertheless, he was able to take advantage of the political situation not only to regain the spiritual independence of the nation but also to expand the limits of the Church’s freedom in Poland effectively. In this context, it was not the least important thing that the primary wave of anti-Church repression came later in Poland than in other Eastern Bloc countries. It

was also due to the logic of the political struggle undertaken by the communists concerning the entire area of Central and Eastern Europe dominated by the Marxist-Leninist ideology after 1945.

However, the situation in Poland was different. There was strong independence underground and an influential political opposition positioned around the Polish People's Party (PSL) and deputy prime minister Stanisław Mikołajczyk. In Poland, one had to deal with the underground, then with Mikołajczyk, to finally hit the Church with all his might. Stalin argued to Bierut that the point was not to arrest and imprison the Primate but to win him over for their own interests. Such a directive created an opportunity for bishop Wyszyński, who in 1948 took Episcopal office at a time when the internal and international situation of Poland had deteriorated. The thickening atmosphere between the Church and the state at the beginning of the 1950s, and the subsequent blows of the Church, made rumors about the Primate's arrest more frequent. The announcement of the decree of February 1953 on the appointment of church posts in practice meant introducing Poland to the Soviet model of "administering" the Orthodox Church.

The bishops responded with a memorial, formulated in May 1953, which ended with a loud sentence: We must not place God's things on the Emperor's altars: *Non possumus* (Wyszyński 1991: 247–260). Consequently, the Primate was interned four months later due to his resistance to the regime's arbitrariness. Cardinal Wyszyński was ready for this sacrifice. As he wrote: "It is wrong to renounce the rebellion against thieves, and the faithful must see an unbending shepherd who does not agree to humiliate the Church" (Wyszyński 1982a: 27). He emphasized the bond with the nation: "There were such situations for the Church that we lost to governments. And we can still lose to the government one way or another, to a party – one way or another, to a state – one or another, but we must not lose to the Nation!" (Wyszyński 1957b: 16).

The episcopate's decisive response in the memorial "*Non possumus*" sealed the fate of the Primate. However, there was also pressure on him to condemn Kielce's bishop, Czesław Kaczmarek, whose trial had just ended. Cardinal Wyszyński, though, protested against the trial and such methods of political struggle. The decision to arrest the Primate was probably taken by Bolesław Bierut and Jakub Berman. First, the matter was discussed at a meeting of the Secretariat of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. Then the Government's Presidium dutifully issued a resolution prohibiting the Primate from exercising any functions in church positions.

Bibliography

- Albert M., Hahnel R., 1981, *Socialism Today and Tomorrow*, South End Press, Boston, Massachusetts, USA.
- Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec kurii biskupich w Polsce*, 2009, red. A. Dziurok, IPN, Warszawa.
- Bankowicz B., 1996, *Ruch księży patriotów 1949–1955, czyli „koń trojański” w polskim Kościele katolickim* [in:] *Ze studiów nad dziejami Kościoła i katolicyzmu w PRL*, red. A. Dudek, B. Bankowicz, PIT, Kraków 1996.
- Bartos M., 2001, „*Non possumus*”: *kompromis i jego granice*, „*Studia nad Rodziną*” 5/2, (9).
- Bączek P., 2001, *W cieniu Prymasa Tysiąclecia, z Romualdem Kukulowiczem rozmawia Piotr Bączek*, Soli Deo, Warszawa.
- Bober S., 2008, *Komu służył PAX*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa.
- Dola K., 1979, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce w latach 1944–1976. Kronika wydarzeń* [in:] *Historia Kościoła w Polsce*, vol. II, part, 2, red. B. Kumor, Z. Obertyński, Pallottinum, Poznań–Warszawa.
- Dominiczak H., 2000, *Organy bezpieczeństwa PRL w walce z Kościołem katolickim 1944–1990. W świetle dokumentów MSW*, Bellona, Warszawa.
- Dudek A., Gryz R., 2006, *Komuniści i Kościół w Polsce 1945–1989*, Znak, Kraków.
- Ficek R., 2020a, *Christians in Socio-Political Life: An Applied Analysis of the Theological Anthropology of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński, Primate of Poland*, Marszałek, Toruń.
- Ficek R., 2020b, *Moral Renewal as a Socio-Religious Imperative and the Destructive Actions of an Oppressive Totalitarian State: In The Context of Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's Personalistic Concept of Social Life*, „*Roczniki Teologiczne*” 67: (5).
- Fijałkowska B., 1999, *Partia wobec religii i Kościoła w PRL*, t. 1: 1944–1955, Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski w Olsztynie, Olsztyn 1999.
- Grajewski A., 1999, *Kompleks Judasza. Kościół zraniony. Chrześcijaństwo w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej między oporem a kolaboracją*, Wydawnictwo „W drodze”, Poznań.
- Gryz R., 1999, *Represje polityczne wobec Episkopatu katolickiego w Polsce w okresie stalinowskim*, „*Czasy Nowożytne*” 6.
- Grzeškowiak A., 2004, *Represje wobec osób duchownych i konsekrowanych w PRL w latach 1944–1989*, WN KUL, Lublin.
- Iwaneczki D., 2007, *Wierny Bogu i Stolicy Apostolskiej. Błogosławiony biskup Jozafat Kocyłowski (1876–1947)*, „*Nasz Dziennik*”, 281 (2994).
- Kaczmarek K., 2002, *Prawda i kłamstwo. Prymas Węgier Józef Mindszenty*, Fronda, Poznań–Warszawa.
- Kała M., 2004, *Formy administracyjnego zwalczania Kościoła katolickiego na Dolnym Śląsku po II wojnie światowej* [in:] *Represje wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Dolnym Śląsku i Opolszczyźnie 1945–1989*, red. S.A. Bogaczewicz, S. Krzyżanowska, PAT, Wrocław.
- Katolicyzm w obliczu zagadnień współczesności. Rozmowa red. Hirowicza z Księdzem Prymasem Polski (Gniezno, Marzec 1953)* [in:] *Stefan Wyszyński, Dzieła zebrane, 1953–1956*, vol. II, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1995.
- Kemp-Welch A., 2008, *Polska pod rządami komunistów. 1944–1989*, IPN, Kraków.
- Konopka H., 2005, *Nauczanie religii w województwie łódzkim na tle innych regionów* [in:] *Władze komunistyczne wobec Kościoła katolickiego w Łódzkiem 1945–1967*, red. J. Wróbel, L. Próchniak, IPN, Warszawa.

- Księżę Niezłomny. Kardynał Adam Stefan Sapieha*, 2001, red. R. Bogacz, Znak, Kraków.
- Leksykon duchowieństwa represjonowanego w PRL w latach 1945–1989*, vol. I–III, 2002–2006, red. J. Myszor, IPN, Warszawa.
- Ligarski S., 2005, *Powojenne procesy księży katolickich oskarżonych o kolaborację w okresie okupacji hitlerowskiej* [in:] *Władze komunistyczne wobec Kościoła katolickiego w Łódzkiem*, red. J. Wróbel, L. Próchniak, IPN, Warszawa.
- Łatka R., 2013, *Czy Prymasa Wyszyńskiego można określić mianem realisty politycznego?*, „Politeja” 3.
- Łatka R., 2019, *Czy Prymas Polski Stefan Wyszyński był antykomunistą?* [in:] *Antykomunizm Polaków w XX wieku*, red. P. Kardela, K. Sacewicz, Białystok–Olsztyn–Warszawa.
- Łatka R., 2020, *Prymas Stefan Wyszyński a system komunistyczny w Polsce „ludowej” w latach 1956–1981* [in:] *Polskie wizje i oceny komunizmu (1917–1989)*, red. M. Kornat, R. Łatka, Warszawa.
- Łatka, R., Marecki J., 2017, *Kościół katolicki w Polsce rządzonej przez komunistów*, IPN, Warszawa.
- Marecki J., 2005, *Działania operacyjne aparatu bezpieczeństwa wobec męskich wspólnot zakonnych na terenie województwa krakowskiego w latach 1945–1975* [in:] *Informator. Nr 25*, red. A. Bandura, S. Rospond, Znak, Kraków.
- Marecki J., 2009, *Zakony pod presją bezpieki. Aparat bezpieczeństwa wobec wspólnot zakonnych na terenie województwa krakowskiego 1944–1975*, Znak, Kraków.
- Mezglewski A., 1998, *Spór o „wygaśnięcie” konkordatu polskiego z 1925 r.*, „Roczniki Nauk Prawnych” 8.
- Musiał F., 2002, *Między prawdą a propagandą. Przebieg procesu krakowskiego na sali sądowej i w propagandzie komunistycznej (11 VIII–10 IX 1947)*, „Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u” 18.
- Neja J., 2003, *Represje wobec duchowieństwa Kościołów chrześcijańskich w okresie stalinowskim w krajach byłego bloku wschodniego*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 35 (2).
- Nitecki P., 1982, *Kardynał Stefan Wyszyński wobec wydarzeń sierpniowych*, „Chrześcijanin w Świecie” 14 (2).
- Nosiński S., 1982, *August Hlond (1926-1948)* [in:] *Na stolicy prymasowskiej w Gnieźnie i w Poznaniu. Szkice o prymasach Polski w okresie niewoli narodowej i w II Rzeczypospolitej*, red. F. Lenort, Pallottinum, Poznań.
- Noszczak B., 2008, *Polityka państwa wobec Kościoła Rzymskokatolickiego w Polsce w okresie internowania prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego 1953–1956*, IPN, Warszawa.
- Pater J., 2004, *Władze PRL wobec ordynariusza wrocławskiego kardynała Bolesława Kominka w latach 1956–1974* [in:] *Represje wobec Kościoła katolickiego na Dolnym Śląsku i Opolszczyźnie 1945–1989*, red. S.A. Bogaczewicz, S. Krzyżanowska, IPN, Wrocław.
- Rezler M., 1994, *Sylwetki zasłużonych poznaniaków. Biogramy historyczne* [in:] *Wielka Księga Miasta Poznania*, red. K. Matusiak, Koziołki Poznańskie, Poznań.
- Romaniuk M.E., 1994, *Życie, twórczość i posługa Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, vol. I., Soli Deo, Warszawa.
- Śledzianowski J., 1991, *Ksiądz Czesław Kaczmarek – biskup kielecki 1895–1963*, Wydawnictwo Kuria Diecezjalna, Kielce.
- Terlecki R., 2006, *Wielki wygnaniec. Metropolita krakowski ksiądz arcybiskup Eugeniusz Baziak* [in:] *Kościół w godzinie próby 1945–1989. Nieznane dokumenty i świadectwa*, Znak, Kraków.

- Wawrzyniak J., 2009, *ZBoWiD i pamięć drugiej wojny światowej 1949–1969*, Wyd. TRIO, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1937, *Katolicki program walki z komunizmem*, Wydawnictwo Diecezjalne, Włocławek.
- Wyszyński S., 1957a, *Kazanie na uroczystość Świętej Rodziny. Warszawa 13.01.1957* [in:] *Kazania i przemówienia autoryzowane 1956–1981, vol. I-XLVII*, Archiwum Instytutu Prymasowskiego w Warszawie, vol. II, 12–24.
- Wyszyński S., 1957b, *Wypełniamy Jasnogórskie Śluby Narodu. Czytania na maj*, Wydawnictwo Jasna Góra, Częstochowa.
- Wyszyński S., 1962, *Apel do duchowieństwa: Pracujmy wszyscy nad wprowadzeniem w życie Ślubów Jasnogórskich. Komańcza – wrzesień 1956* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Wielka Nowenna Tysiąclecia*, Paris.
- Wyszyński S., 1974, „Homo Dei”, *I kazanie świętokrzyskie (13.01.1974)* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*.
- Wyszyński S., 1977, *Życzenia wigilijne Kościoła Polskiego. Do kapłanów stolicy. Warszawa-Miodowa 24.12.1977* [in:] *Kazania i przemówienia autoryzowane 1956–1981, vol. I-XLVII*, Archiwum Instytutu Prymasowskiego w Warszawie, vol. LVII.
- Wyszyński S., 1982a, *Bezcenna wartość ludzkiego życia. Jasna Góra 2.12.1956* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Prymas Polski w obronie życia*, vol. I, ODISS, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1982b, *Zapiski więzienne, Soli Deo*, Wrocław.
- Wyszyński S., 1990a, *Nie oczekujemy życia łatwego: Podczas ingresu do katedry lubelskiej (26.05.1946)* [in:] *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, ODISS, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1990b, *Sumienie prawe u podstaw odnowy życia narodowego. Do wiernych w archikatedrze warszawskiej 6.01.1981* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, ODISS, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1990c, *Homo Dei, I kazanie świętokrzyskie 13.01.1974* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, ODISS, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1991, *List Prymasa Polski do Rady Ministrów z dnia 8 maja 1953 („Non possumus”)* [in:] S. Wyszyński, *Dziela zebrane 1949–1953, vol. I*, Soli Deo, Warszawa.
- Wyszyński S., 1993, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna. Rozważania społeczne*, Pallottinum, Poznań.
- Zamiatała D., 2000, *Caritas. Działalność i likwidacja organizacji. 1945–1950*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin.
- Zieliński Z., 2003, *Kościół w Polsce 1944-2002*, Polskie Wydawnictwo Encyklopedyczne, Radom.
- Żaryn J., 1997, *Aparat bezpieczeństwa w walce z duchowieństwem katolickim 1945–1949 (zarys problemu)* [in:] *Skryte oblicze systemu komunistycznego: u źródeł zła*, red. R. Bäcker, P. Hübner, DiG, Warszawa.
- Żaryn J., 1989, *Gurgacz Władysław Jan* [in:] *Leksykon duchowieństwa represjonowanego w PRL w latach 1945–1989, t. 1*, red. J. Myszor, Wydawnictwo Verbinum, Warszawa.
- Żaryn J., 1997, *Kościół a władza w Polsce 1945–1950*, DiG, Warszawa.
- Żaryn J., 1998, *Stolica Apostolska wobec Polski i Polaków w latach 1944–1958*, Neriton, Warszawa.
- Żaryn J., 2003, *Dzieje Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1944–1989)*, Neriton, Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa.
- Безансон А., 1998, *Интеллектуальные истоки ленинизма*, МИК, Москва.

Realizm przetrwania: Stefan Wyszyński wobec powojennej transformacji politycznej Polski (1945–1956)

Streszczenie

W artykule poddano analizie działalność dydaktyczno-duszpasterską kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego w kontekście powojennych przemian ustrojowych państwa polskiego. Dokonana przez autora interpretacja materiałów źródłowych ma na celu ukazanie roli i znaczenia posługi kardynała dla Kościoła i całego narodu. Eksploracja badań będzie polegała na analizie tekstów źródłowych metodą historyczną, tj. rekonstrukcji faktów historycznych i ich reinterpretacji metodą indukcyjno-dedukcyjną. Podstawowym celem badawczym artykułu jest przedstawienie powojennej sytuacji społeczno-politycznej kraju oraz strategii Kościoła katolickiego w Polsce, której głównym inspiratorem był prymas Wyszyński. Ukazanie istotnego wpływu prymasa Wyszyńskiego, który w imieniu Kościoła w Polsce zobowiązał się wezwać duchownych do uznania i poszanowania władzy państwowej, współpracy przy odbudowie kraju i wspierania wszelkich wysiłków na rzecz umocnienia pokoju i wzajemnej współpracy, pozwoli na pełniejsze zrozumienie skomplikowanych relacji pomiędzy Kościołem a państwem komunistycznym w okresie powojennej transformacji ustrojowej Polski.

Słowa klucze: kardynał Stefan Wyszyński, Polska Rzeczpospolita Ludowa, Kościół Katolicki, transformacja polityczna, ideologia komunistyczna, personalizm