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PEOPLE AND THE CHURCH VERSUS THE STATE:
The Case of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland

by Szymon Chodak

There is a large city square in the capital city of Poland which before World War II was called Jozef Pilsudski Square. It was renamed Adolf Hitler Platz under the Nazis. After 1945, in commemoration of the victory over the Nazis, it was renamed Victory Square; the name remains. Following the imposition of General Jaruzelski's military rule in December 1981, the square turned into a battlefield for a different victory: day after day, for several months, the people of Warsaw erected there a huge floral cross, a monument to the outlawed Solidarity union movement. On some days the cross bore the portrait of the interned Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa. On other days it was adorned with the now famous red on white inscription, Solidarność. Every night, the police removed the flowers. Every day the people returned and rebuilt the cross. Eventually, the police and the dreaded ZOMO security forces, with their clubs, tear gas and water cannons, came at noon, when the crowd was praying and singing hymns. The flowers were trampled over and the
crowd was forcefully dispersed. Then the authorities erected a high grey fence around Victory Square to prevent the people of Warsaw from gathering and rebuilding it with flowers again. The fence—the Jaruzelski victory monument—now stands in the heart of Warsaw like that other wall stands in the center of Berlin. The fence is symbolic not only of confrontation, but of the long, ongoing struggle between the Solidarity movement, backed by the Catholic Church, and the government of Poland, backed by the Soviet Union.

Under the Communist system, churches are excluded from the political activities and from many spheres of social activity. The Church is not supposed to form political parties, or get too involved in current politics. Generally, the church's concerns are limited to religious and moral issues. They are expected to speak up only in special situations, when economic, social and political issues involve a highly ethical dimension. Then they are expected by the people not to remain silent, even when governments feel differently.

In Poland the Roman Catholic Church has succeeded in preserving its traditional influence and giving new meaning to traditional values and norms, while acquiring a new role in contemporary society. In attempting to preserve both its religious and its nationalistic hold on society, the Polish Church has supported causes which earlier had been those of the secular left-wing intellectual opposition and the nationalistic forces. Even though it remains conservative on many issues, to large sections of the Polish society the Church stands for freedom of expression, association and equality, and defence of national identity and traditions. Defence of the right to worship thus has evolved into the defence of freedom of thought and expression and into the broader spectrum of human rights. Without becoming a political party or competing for political power, the Polish Church has taken on the role of a unique, non-partisan umbrella institution that defends the right to profess ideals differing from those imposed by the State. Because of this position vis-à-vis the State, the Church has won an unprecedented popularity and respect among the Polish population.

Previous, periodic rebellions took place in Poland in 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1978. In those instances only certain sections of the
population were involved. The election of Karol Wojtyła to the Papacy and his subsequent visit to Poland in the Summer of 1979 engendered a situation where all forces that opposed the State became united, and involved the entire population in all kinds of anti-governmental activities. Widespread strikes erupted in Gdansk, Silezia and Bydgoszcz. The workers not only demanded higher wages and opposed food price increases, but also called for, and won, a number of unprecedented political concessions. These included the right to form unions free of Party control, the right to strike, and the right of workers to voice their opinions on the division of national income for consumption and for investment, and on wage and price policies—all matters which, until then, had been determined by the Party alone. They also demanded, and were promised by the government, an easing of censorship of essential published information, as well as media access for their representatives and the Church. Peasants joined in with their demands to establish a Peasant Solidarity Union. The government, which refused at first to allow such an organization, had to relent and accept this demand also.

What began as merely a struggle against food price increases in some sections of the population, a struggle for freedom of religious practices in another section, and for intellectual freedom in still other parts of society, evolved into a major ongoing struggle for the transformation of the system of government and of social conditions. This situation is unprecedented in Communist-ruled countries. The Soviet Union could, of course, have quelled this rebellion by sending its troops and K.G.B. forces into Poland. The price it would have paid for this would have been so high, however, that it has not dared to do to Poland what it did to Czechoslovakia and Hungary. The Soviets have entrusted this job, for the moment, to General Jaruzelski and the military.

During its heydey, when it still was legal in December 1981, ten million people, including a large number of Party members, belonged to the first independent union in the Communist countries, Solidarność, which refused to recognize the guidance of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP). During the August 1982 demonstrations, the fully equipped security forces, in some instances army units, were positioned all over
the country to face possible demonstrations. Still, in about 60 cities people came out in mass to face the police formations. Regardless of the way it is evaluated, and to whom the victory is attributed, it was proof that the massive support for Solidarity has not vanished. Poland has thus become a Communist country where farmers are not collectivized, where the Church, which has never accepted the control of the Party, enjoys wide support among the intellectuals and the masses; and also a country where workers, most of the population, are involved in permanent rebellion—in some periods openly, in others, subdued and passively. This struggle continues and the outcome cannot be predicted. Despite the fact that Solidarity has been outlawed and many of its activists kept in internment, and despite military rule, the workers have won a major victory in their struggle against control by the State.

It also has been a victory for the Roman Catholic Church. Left-wing intellectuals of the Committee of Social Self-Defense (K.O.R.) cooperated in this struggle with Catholic intellectuals by advising workers at striking plants. Crosses were erected at many sites where strikers were protesting not only against workers', but intellectuals' conditions, as well. Priests prayed in workshops and factories. Striking women in factories sang religious songs. The first thing that Walesa, leader of the striking workers, did after the victorious conclusion of negotiations with the state representatives, was to go to Warsaw and see Primate Wyszynski. When asked about the meaning of the crosses at their plants, the workers explained that most of them were believers. Yet the cross was regarded not merely as a religious symbol, but as a symbol of the workers' position; the working class, they believe, is crucified in Poland.

The workers, although believers, were not simply blind followers of the Church. The strikers rejected the archbishop's call for moderation during the course of the strike and for acceptance of the government's offer. The Church, though venerated, was also expected to represent public sentiment. The Church is aware of this. In a sense, it is acting in its traditional nationalistic role, which developed during the 19th century when Poland was ruled by Russia, Prussia, and Austria. It also is playing a new role developed in accordance with its interpretation of
The Julian Character of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland

The issue, as seen by Catholics and non-Catholic intellectuals and some part of the clergy in Poland, can be outlined as follows: Since Christianity became the official religion under Emperor Constantine in the 4th century, the Church participated in the exercise of political power, at first in Rome and Byzantium, and then elsewhere in Europe. In spite of occasional conflicts and disruptions in relations between the monarchy and the clergy, the duality of the secular and the ecclesiastic authorities was preserved almost until World War II. The Church enjoyed many benefits from this participation. Some aspects of this exercise of power, however, are presently considered to have been disadvantageous to the Church and inconsistent with its religious mission. As a participant in the official structure of power and bearer of official ethical values, the Church was part of the establishment. It had to protect the existing social order and political power structure and these could not always be regarded as ethical enough from a Christian position.

In the course of the 20th century, however, the Constantinian period came to an end. The Roman Catholic Church, like other churches, has been increasingly excluded from the exercise of political power and from decision-making processes, not only in Communist, but in Western and other countries as well. It has lost control over education and welfare services. As a result, some of the clergy at the Council, and even more so in Poland later, felt that the Catholic Church not only must accept separation from the state but, in turn, must declare its own separation from the establishment in general, and particularly from the state and corporate structure. They felt that the church had a moral obligation to defend social justice, the right of individuals to protect their individuality, and other essential rights. They called for the church to condemn the materialism and social injustice perpetrated by capitalism, socialism and the contemporary state. The Council recognized this change. It adopted, however, a modest formula in defining its position. In paragraph 76 of the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, the Council declared that "the Church, by reason of her
role and competence, is not identified in any way with the political community nor bound to any political system. She is at once a sign and a safe-guard of the transcendent character of the human Person."

The new situation was also discussed in many documents released by the Council, particularly in the Constitution on the Church in the Modern World. This document, and its implications for state-church relations, was reviewed with great interest by the Polish Catholic press and was analysed in a number of books which appeared in Poland. Both the hierarchy of the Church and the Catholic intelligentsia searched for a model of state-church relations and were keen to establish the identity of the church vis-à-vis the state, and particularly the communist state.

The Polish Church has a long history of resisting the encroachment of the State. For a hundred and fifty years, in areas under Russian occupation, it operated under the restrictions of the Tsarist regime, which regarded it as an alien nationalist force. The tsars claimed the right to appoint the highest posts of the clergy. They wanted full control of all links between the Catholic Church and the Vatican. At one time, they even demanded that the Church substitute Russian for Latin as the official Church language. After World War II, under the Communist regime, the Church was pushed out of public life, restricted to ritual performances only, restricted in building new churches, forced to pay heavy property taxes, harrassed in various ways, and accused of serving foreign enemies.

The Polish Church was one of the first large national Roman Catholic Churches forced to confront a Communist state, in which the government claimed exclusive control not only over political and economic affairs, but in the sphere of education, family life, and moral standards as well. This situation was well outlined in a recent article:

As for the communists, their Marxist-Leninist doctrine demanded clear repudiation of any sort of religious ideology; the law of history and not the grace of God laid the foundation for the dictatorship of the proletariat. The communist leaders had every reason to announce war on the Church. But there also were good reasons for declaring only cold war. The Church had a coherent, uniform
organization, not inferior to that of the Communist Party, and in addition it had a large social basis which the communists lacked. The communists had for the time being to tolerate the independence of their implacable opponent, but by no means did they intend to maintain this situation for ever.

Fighting the new encroachment of the state in all spheres of life, the Church began to oppose policies that restricted its influence and that reduced individuals to interchangeable participants in state agencies in what to the Church seemed a morally and culturally devastating environment. Unexpectedly, even to itself, perhaps, the Church took on a role it had not held at any other place or time.

At first, the Church was only reacting and defending itself against restrictions. But gradually the Church began to initiate a more systematic action in defence of its principles and activity. Eventually, the leadership of the Church began to raise moral issues important to society, but conflicting with the Party's policy. While getting involved in such activities which, evidently, contained political implications, the Polish Church refused to act as political opposition in the strictly political meaning of the word. Whether this was intended or not, and whether the leadership of the Church accepted it or not, by asserting its religious, cultural, and moral role in society it performed the role of the principal opposition in society. Because it formed the only legally available organization outside the all-embracing state and because it promoted a different morality and different value standards, it was perceived as an alternative to the State. Because the Church was excluded from political activities, was persecuted, and yet had to speak out against the immorality of state bureaucracy, discrimination against believers and non-Party members, it began to represent, at first, the social and political strivings of believers, and eventually of the left-wing Democratic and New Socialist movement as well. In spite of the fact that the Church continued to cling to its conservative tradition, it was regarded as being progressive and, indeed, had to support the movement for democracy. It was thus transformed into a vehicle of revolt. This was similar to the situation in the 19th century. Then, under the partition of Poland, the Church was regarded as the principal institution of national identity and unity, as well as the abode of
national consciousness. It is still viewed as acting in this capacity.

In our times, however, it is said that the Church has changed. It does not represent the Constantinian tradition but a new Julian tradition in the Church's history.

Julian Apostate, nephew of Constantine I who ruled the Roman empire from 361 to 363, in an effort to restore the culture of antiquity, attempted to destroy the Church by excluding it from participation in the power structure. He did not institute a systematic persecution of Christians, yet as a result of this exclusion from political power, the Church was forced to act in a different role than it did under Constantine. Using the analogy of ancient times, the Polish writer Bohdan Cywiński, has coined the concept Julian Church to denote the features of the Church when it was forced to act under the conditions of the post-Constantinian period. Deprived of its political position in society, it sustains its position by winning respect through its moral authority. According to Cywiński:

the Julian is exactly the opposite to the Constantinian situation. Instead of cooperating, the secular and ecclesiastic authorities are in conflict. The Church is put in a position in which she has no option but to be in opposition. She is devoid of political power but is recognized by the society as its principal moral authority. This provides her with a new source of strength... Persecuted and abandoned by opportunists, the Julian Church is nevertheless residing at the highest ethical altitudes in the eyes of the public. She is surrounded by glory and applause. The Julian tradition is beautiful and durable.

Cywiński further pointed out:

the Julian is not a Church which on its own volition gave up the participation in power. To the contrary, she is rancorous and bitter that she was excluded from participation of it.

What is even more important is that in this new moral capacity, the Church does not necessarily identify itself with the society whose moral authority it represents. Rather, the Church stands aloof and expects society to identify itself with the values and striving of the Church. This, Cywiński points out, is obviously very different from representing
and reflecting the values and hopes of the people. But at the same time it wins the support of the masses because it is persecuted. Cywiński also asserts that the Julian Church claims to have a monopoly on moral righteousness. As a result, it refuses to recognize and to cooperate with other groups that oppose the State. This was the case in ancient Julian times. It also is the case in present-day Poland, where the Church has been forced into the role of an opposition that refuses to accept secular groups who call themselves opposition and who fight the state.

It must be observed that, to some extent, this situation has changed recently. The secular, and frequently socialist or left-wing, opposition in Poland, recognizing the ethical authority of the Church among the masses, views the Church as the leading force of dissent. Regardless of its objections to the Vatican's and the Polish clergy's position on matters such as family planning and birth control, where the Church takes a conservative stand, the secular opposition stands on the side of the Church on the principal issue at present—opposition to the all-controlling state. Again, partially against the explicit wishes of some members of the clergy, the Church has been transformed into the patron of all opposition forces. It warns against violence but is obliged to forgive individuals who fight the oppressive state, even if they turn to open rebellion. It calls for moderation, but should the workers and peasants have to face the police or the Soviet army, the Church would have to support them against the establishment.

It also must be observed that the Polish Catholic Church has become the high moral and social authority of society, not only because it is no longer a part of the organization of power and state, and is in the Julian position, but as a result of a number of other factors. First, in Poland, not only was the Church excluded from exercising power, but the opposition-minded individuals were prohibited from forming a legal opposition, and, therefore, turned to the persecuted Church and used it in their struggle. Second, in contrast to other churches in Eastern Europe whose role and prestige in society are presently declining, the Polish Church has become more militant in its religious, ethical and political activities. As a result, the Church actively promotes a strong
moral and ideological challenge to the Party and the State. Finally, the Church has been led by the strong-willed Archbishops Wyszynski, Wojtyła, Kaczmarek, Klepacz, and others who have fearlessly opposed the State, and, therefore, became influential and charismatic figures in society. Because they challenged the State on moral grounds rather than on strictly political terms, they won social approval and were able to enhance religiosity as well.

Three Features of Polish Religiosity

Elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Britain, France and the Scandinavian countries, no more than five percent of the population attend church on an average Sunday. Even in the traditionally religious Latin countries of Southern Europe, the number of active Catholics is rapidly dwindling. This decline has been attributed to growing urbanization, industrialization, the spread of secular education, dissolution of traditional communal localities, abandonment of antiquated norms, and other similar causes. Yet in Communist Poland, which has rapidly become industrialized and urbanized and has one of the world's highest percentage of university graduates and those who are involved in contemporary intellectual concerns, the churches are usually crowded on Sundays. To be sure, in their daily habits, most Poles do not seem to be more religious than, for instance, Italians or other Catholics in Europe. On the whole, they are not fanatical about religion. In this strongly Catholic country, the rate of divorce is one of the highest in Europe. Birth control and abortion are widely practiced. There is ample evidence that, to some of the Polish people, participation in religious acts is important for truly religious reasons. To others, however, it provides the means through which they can manifest their nationalist feelings. To still others, the Church is an institution through which they can express their opposition to the government's inadequacy in solving the country's economic and social problems, as well as to its dependence on the Soviet Union.

As in the 19th century, the Catholic Church now constitutes the anchorage of national tradition. It provides the link with the civilizational entity of the West, to which the intelligentsia as well as the
masses feel they belong culturally and psychologically. Poland is Catholic not only because most Poles are christened at birth and marry in the Church, nor because many attend Mass, but mostly because they identify themselves as belonging to a Roman Catholic civilization; because they profess a Roman Catholic world-outlook and ideology. They may not subscribe to the Vatican's position on birth control or other issues any more than is done elsewhere in Europe, yet they regard the Pope, the Polish Primate, and the leading bishops as their true national spiritual leaders. Even the Party must now accept this as reality.

Most Poles are unhappy with the government and the political system not only because of the standard of living or because the government's policies are wasteful and inefficient, but also because they feel that theirs is a government imposed by the Soviet Union, and therefore not truly their own. As mentioned above, the Church is perceived as the alternative. To most of the population, the Church represents the ideology of truth, human dignity, freedom of belief and thought, righteousness, and other noble standards. But again it is not a blind following. The Church is and will be esteemed only as long as it represents the sentiments of the population. This became quite evident during the recent labor unrest. The population strongly protested against the Church's reconciliation attempts during the strikes. The Church must relentlessly oppose the system to earn respect and support.

Forms of Religiosity in Poland

Religiosity in Polish conditions has a different meaning than elsewhere. Different religions offer differing roads to salvation; in some instances by means of purely ritual activities, in others by asserting the importance of ethical achievement, and in still others through one's work in God's vineyards. At times, the way is through involvement in politics. In today's Poland, religiosity can be characterized as an emotional syndrome in which the beliefs in God, pursuance of religious ritualistic practices, nationalism, anti-Soviet and anti-government sentiments, attachment to traditions, sublime idealism, and idealistic preference for noble ethical values and norms
are closely interwoven and transpose one into another. For the purpose of this discussion it is possible to distinguish three features of religiosity in contemporary Polish society: (a) ritualistic, (b) spiritual, and (3) ideological.

Ritualistic religiosity consists of outward manifestations and observances of rules as well as participation in ceremonial events prescribed by the doctrine and liturgy of the faith.

Max Weber has written that a religion of salvation may systematize the purely formal and specific activities of ritual into a devotion with a distinctive religious mood, in which the rules to be performed are symbols of the divine. In such a case the religious mood is the true instrument of salvation.

Weber further points out that, as a result of the emphasis put on rituals, religions tend to become routine and are frequently devoid of true spirituality. Weber goes on to say that consequently—in his opinion—the possession of an essentially ephemeral subjective state is striven after, and this subjective state—because of the idiosyncratic irresponsibility characterizing, for example, the hearing of a mass or the witnessing of a mystical play—has only a negligible effect on behavior once the ceremony is over. The meager influence such experiences frequently have upon everyday ethical living may be compared to the insignificant influence of a beautiful and inspiring play upon the theater public which has witnessed it.

In those rather rare instances when occasional devotion induced by rituals escalates into a piety that extends to everyday living, ritualistic piety most readily takes on a mystical character.

As elsewhere, religiosity in Poland is often routine and sporadic. In this country, however, religious observances have taken on a nationalistic character. Many participants in Church activities in Poland would have difficulty separating their religious and nationalistic emotions. As a result of this process, a phenomenon that is different from the one described by Weber is occurring. Devoid of true
religious piety, ritualistic observances acquire a patriotic meaning as strong as deeply religious devotion. To these people the Holy Mary—patron of Poland—and the Motherland Poland amalgamate into one sacred tradition. Others consciously participate in religious activities in order to demonstrate their opposition to the godless and, in a sense, foreign state.

Even though the entire phenomenon has political significance, three categories of people can be distinguished among those who attribute importance to ritualistic religious observances in Poland: those who observe religious observances occasionally, those who observe rites regularly, and those who observe religious rites to indicate and demonstrate their political and ideological interest.

(1) As in the West, most Poles who live their lives with little attention to strict observances of religious norms, arrange to have religious rites on important life-occasions, such as christening of the newborn, marriage and death. Some do it because they wish to continue the tradition, others because the religious act marks this special occasion more ceremoniously. Still others accept religious rites in order to please their religious relatives. It is estimated that, on the whole, at least 95 percent of the Polish population arrange religious rites to christen newborn children and on the occasion of death. Approximately 85 percent marry in churches besides having legal civil marriages. About 60 percent attend churches on Sundays at least once a month. According to a study by Bishop Pluto, up to 40 percent of believers who attend church feel that it is right to practice birth control, and only 60 percent seem to agree that divorce is immoral and unacceptable for a Roman Catholic.9

According to another writer, "95% of the population of Poland is Catholic (total population 33 million in 1972), and about 75% of them are practicing Catholics (in the rural areas from 75% to 90%, in the cities 60% to 75%)."10

Should no other than ritualistic meaning be attributed to church practices, they would have, as elsewhere, the primary importance of routine. In Poland, however, and to some extent in other East European countries, a different meaning must be attributed even to strictly
ritualistic participation in church activities. In instances where individuals participating in religious acts are Party members or hold important positions in the administration, they commit an act of disloyalty to Party authorities and have to do it at the risk of impairing their career advancement because of the strong recommendation by the Party against such involvement. The routine is then transformed into insubordination. An act of little more than ritualistic importance in other circumstances becomes an act of ethical disobedience with political significance.

(2) The majority of regular citizens who do not subordinate their lives to goal-oriented career achievements take part in religious observances in due course and without regard to how this would affect their promotions. To these people it is an act of tradition if not routine, a due paid to their religious communities and to God; if not an act of religious piety, then a sort of religious insurance-payment to be observed for their own and their family's well-being. Even these acts take on a different dimension when the government is involved in extensive efforts, at great cost, to reduce the religious involvement of its citizens.

Though the state attempted to discredit the clergy by various accusations of deception, immorality, and anti-patriotism, the population nevertheless expressed attachment and trust in the clergy. This thus should be seen as a political phenomenon.

(3) Certain people, especially youth and non-religious intelligentsia, take part in religious observances solely for political purposes—to demonstrate their opposition to the State and to express support for opposition forces. Recent events, such as the election of Karol Wojtyła to the Papacy, and the labor unrest of 1981, enhanced the position of the political opposition, causing more of this group to attend churches. Some of the people who attend churches for political reasons eventually become true believers as well.

The essence of religiosity is supposed to be spiritual. Spiritual religiosity means a deep and conscious belief in God, eternal salvation, and other teachings of the faith as well as observance of religious norms in regular daily practices. A good part of the Polish population
can be characterized as religious in the spiritual sense of the term. Within any society, spiritually religious people comprise a minority within the larger religious community who attribute importance to religious observances. A large number of Poles annually participate in pilgrimages to Jasna Gora in Czestochowa and in other special religious ceremonies and pilgrimages organized by the Church. Many of these are deeply religious people who attribute importance to spiritual matters. But today, not only believers but even some groups of atheists and non-believers march for nine days, 350 kilometers, in such pilgrimages, to demonstrate their solidarity with religious people. The vast body of religious Catholic literature that discusses issues of spiritual religiosity, ethics and matters of doctrine is in great demand; this is an even stronger indication of the concern of the population under the present regime. Poles were not only born Catholics, but had to choose to be Catholic against the advice of the Party and against other "realistic" considerations. People join the persecuted Julian Church, therefore, with feelings similar to those of the early Christians.

The term ideological religiosity is employed to denote displays of religious behavior that reflect not only general ethical values but a peculiar ideological attitude that first emerged under Tsarist rule, then during the Nazi occupation, and which has largely re-emerged under Communist rule.

In order to discuss ideological religiosity, one must deal with concepts which in Western literature carry a fairly fuzzy connotation. One must distinguish between "dissidents," "opposition" and the wider and less institutionalized "protest movement." Since these phenomena overlap, this distinction, important as it is, has only a relative validity. Tadeusz Szafar astutely points out that "Dissenters and dissidents can exist only within the 'church' or at least within the 'religion,' not outside it and in total opposition to it. Such terms might thereby be legitimately used in relation to a Sakharov or a Medvedev, but not to a Solzhenitsyn or Bukovsky." When speaking of dissidents, one speaks of rebellious intellectuals who, in quest of human rights, freedom of expression and social justice, act within the Party in the hope of transforming it into a democratic, socialist
institution. Others act outside the Party but still make it more efficient and do serve the needs of the people. Some of the dissidents are eventually forced to reject the system and to act within the wider movement of spontaneous opposition and mass protest. They become anti-communist or anti-state activists.

In 1979-81, dissidents and rebel activists who felt that the system must be changed, started the publication of numerous uncensored and, therefore, illegal ideological and political periodicals, pamphlets and leaflets. They have established one major and a number of smaller publishing houses which released several hundred uncensored books. They have operated an underground university in private apartments and churches. Some well-known professors from state universities and the Academy of Sciences taught in this unique school that was modelled on the "flying universities" during Tsarist and Nazi times, when Polish universities were forbidden.

Opposition within the system is obviously not allowed under the Communist regime. The Church, the independent "Solidarity" union, and then also the union of agricultural producers—and, in fact, all the various dissenting groups—make a great effort to assert that they do not challenge the role of the Party or constitute a political opposition. Nevertheless, an unstructured opposition, in the sense that it opposed past and present policies and practices of the Party, emerged. In 1980, according to some observers, the opposition was comprised of three forces: the Church and the movement supporting it, the democratic intelligentsia organized around the Committee of Social Self-Defence (K.O.R.), and the nationalist groups most manifestly represented by the Movement for Defense of Human and Civil Rights (R.O.B.C.I.O.). Others consider Solidarity to be the principal opposition to the Party. Spontaneously interacting in the perceived common interest, these movements condemned undemocratic and unsocialistic practices of state bureaucrats. The workers and the wider protest movements, involving millions of people, are not only dissident or opposition. They are involved in a class-like struggle against the ruling bureaucratic and privileged elite.

The Church does not promote any official ideological or political
program. Its position, represented by the leading clergy, is mostly intended to reflect the values of Catholic ethics. Rather than express any opposition, the late Primate Wyszynski and other eminent bishops admonished "our brothers Communist who rule us" against breaking their own law in disregarding the nation's constitution. They criticized the government for ineptitude in administration and for engaging in ill-advised programs to increase the power of the State, or for no apparent reason at all, instead of for the welfare of the people. At the same time, the Church cautioned against the use of violence and called the people to accept the political realities determined by the geo-political situation of Poland constantly under the threat of foreign intervention. The Church also denounced materialism, hedonism, common cynicism and dishonesty engendered under bureaucratic rule and the frequently practiced discrimination against church-goers.

To the Polish people, disenchanted with the idea of political and social revolution advocated by Party-appartchiks, and by those who reject both capitalism and socialism, and who abhor growing etatization and bureaucracy, the Church proposes a new alternative. It calls for a moral revolution in which each individual would raise his/her own ethical milieu and thus the entire ethical milieu of society. In short, the Church does not compete for power and does not advocate a change of system, although it would evidently welcome it. It is, therefore, not an opposition in the competitive sense. It opposes the Party in power as a moral authority of the nation. Yet, as was mentioned above, the Church stops short of calling for political rebellion. At this point it becomes an unwilling ally of the Party; an ally of the Party that can live with widespread dissatisfaction but is afraid of riots and possible disobedience of the police and army, should these forces be ordered to quell a major popular uprising that may also provoke Soviet intervention.

Catholic Lay Groups

Apart from the Church itself and the various groups related to K.O.R., R.O.B.C.I.O., and other organizations, one must mention a number of so-called "clubs," discussion societies that represent different
shades of Catholic ideology and act legally within the system. Clubs began to appear as early as the late 1940s, after World War II. They were tolerated by the state in the hope that in due course the party would transform them into its own agencies to control Roman Catholic public opinion. Two such clubs, representing quite distinctive orientations, first emerged: Pax and Znak [Sign]. Pax was established by Bolesław Piasecki and a group of other former members of the Endecja, the pre-war Polish Falangist extreme rightist party. At a time when other non-Communist parties and independent organizations were disbanded and suppressed, this organization of former extreme rightist authoritarians and chauvinists was not only allowed to develop but to own factories and run other businesses in order to finance its operation. For years, Pax was paying its employees the highest salaries in Poland. It is widely believed (and in the early '60s the official Polish press dared to allude) that this was possible only because Pax was actually a front organization for, or at least operated under the patronage of, the Soviet K.G.B.. Pax has not given up many of the ideological objectives of Roman Dmowski, founder of the pre-war Endecja, enemy of Marshal Piłsudski (the man who established and ran the between-war regime), and of all centrist, liberal and socialist groups. During the '50s and up into the '80s, it strived to implement some of the old Falangist goals, this time in close cooperation with the Soviet Union. Their objective was promoted in a program claiming to represent a "truly national realistic approach." The main idea of it consisted, and still consists, of Catholic and Communist cooperation in building a new order at first in Poland and then, by extension, everywhere else. If it was dissatisfied with the existing state of affairs at all, Pax was resentful of only one major mistake of the Party. In their opinion, the Polish United Workers' Party did not involve Pax in the actual exercise of power. In a superb book, WspółIrzadzic czy nie kładzić? [To Jointly Rule or Not To Lie?], published in Polish, Andrzej Micewski, himself a former active member of Pax and later of other Catholic clubs, wrote that Pax and Znak stood for so distinctively different Polands, that in avoidance of any confusion, one should not even discuss the two visions in one book together. He chose to discuss the two groups in separate
parts. He described Pax as an offspring of the pre-war Polish Falangist movement. Piasecki is characterized as a man who, in order to be part of the ruling elite, would be willing to serve any force in power. With an articulated revulsion, Micewski summarizes Pax's program, as one calling to serve God best by serving the Church, the People and the Party which is building socialism. Contemptuous of masses, Piasecki felt that the populace is just obliged to follow the leader, because the leader alone knows in which direction to march. The Party was suspicious of this program, because its declared objective was to serve God. Primate Wyszynski characterized Piasecki's program as "a journey to God without God." Claude Naurois wrote about it in a book entitled Dieu contre Dieu. Distrusted and even condemned by the Church and the wider circles of Catholic public opinion, Pax has not been able to win the Party's real trust either. The Party supported Pax or asked for its support only at a time when it attacked Znak, other Catholic groups, or the Church leadership as a whole, and whenever it wanted to contrast the "unpatriotic" Catholics with the good and "patriotic ones," supporting the Party. Now, once more, without Piasecki, who died recently, Pax activists are beginning to play a more important role than usual. Perhaps under the system in which the abnormal, marshal law conditions established by the military would be declared normal, they might indeed be given some important positions of the rulership structure.

Znak was established in Cracow, soon after World War II, as a group cooperating with the Catholic weekly Tygodnik Powszechny. Frequently harrassed, and at times strongly restricted and even banned, it nevertheless managed to persevere in promulgation of Catholic ethics, in defending the cause of human rights, and in propagating ideas akin to those of French philosophers Camus and Maritain, existentialists such as Marcel and Heidegger, and views of Tillich. At a time, when Pax embraced totalitarianism and labeled it Catholic statesmanship, Znak stood for Catholic humanism. It accepted the fact that the Communists are and will remain in power for the time being. Instead, however, of engaging in the power game under such conditions, it called for a "positivist" and not "romantic" way of action. ("Romanic" was the traditional 19th-century Polish way to struggle for the preservation of Catholic ethics and
national culture.) Viewing Communist politics as immoral, at least until 1965, 
Znak wanted to be only an observer, which occasionally voiced protest against the most immoral of deeds. It believed that by practicing differently from the Party's standards of ethics, and continuing the Polish cultural tradition, the Church, in fact, in spite of the Party's domination, generated a situation which allowed for some pluralism. Acting under the slogan, "Not to Lie Regardless Of The Cost To Be Paid," Znak defended students and intellectuals after the 1968 unrest, and workers during and after the 1970 and 1976 troubles. 15

Eventually, during the late '50s and the '60s, splinter groups of Pax formed other clubs: Wiez and the so-called Centre for Documentation and Social Studies (ODISS). These new groups adopted the ethics and philosophy of Znak, but aspired to a more active role in politics than Znak members strived for. Still later, during the '70s, Znak itself was split into two wings, one willing to cooperate with the Party more than the other, which stayed with the more no-compromise position.

The main purpose of Catholic clubs was to provide a forum for discussion for groups interested in religious and cultural issues, as well as to provide the Catholic public with its own press. Each of the clubs published a journal; some published weeklies. Pax built a press empire. It published journals, weeklies and even a daily paper. The clubs organized discussion groups. They were allowed to have a few representatives in the Polish Seym, the formal rubber-stamp national assembly. And to create confusion, although this representation was comprised of members of all clubs and not of Znak only, it was called and recognized as a faction of Znak.

The faction could exercise close to no influence in the decision-making process; the Seym, as a whole, has little actual power. Still, it provided certain possibilities. After the tumultuous events in 1968, 1970, 1976, during the adoption of the new Polish Constitution and the emergence of Solidarity, some members of this faction voiced protest over a number of issues. In 1981, after the establishment of Solidarity as an independent union, K.O.R., the Left intellectuals' group, dissolved itself. Its members accepted different active roles in the Solidarity organization. Many members of Znak, Wiez, ODISS acted
likewise. All these people, Catholics and non-believers alike, were later interned. Some, accused of crimes not yet specified, will be tried soon.

The impact of Catholic clubs in unifying the opposition forces in Poland was spectacular. These legally independent Catholic organizations provided showwindows for ideas and ideals of the Church, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, Left-Wing, socialist, humanist and other opposition forces.16

Communist Policy; Church Policy

Over the years, the policy of the Polish Party-State vis-á-vis the Church has changed several times. At first, the Party launched an all-out frontal attack against the Church. Some Church property, particularly in the new, western provinces was seized. Restrictions were imposed on certain Church activities. The Church was forbidden to erect new church buildings and chapels. Members of the clergy were persecuted and given jail terms under different accusations. During the fifties, the Primate was exiled to a convent where he spent a number of years in isolation. Occasionally, in times of crisis, the Party-State sought reconciliation with, and even the support of, the Church. It promised to ban further persecution, to allow the building of new churches and to forbid discrimination against believers.

Another policy involved the penetration of the church hierarchy and developing the so called "priest-patriots" movement, an internal Church opposition to the Episcopate, or inducement of splits of other kinds within the clergy. In return for this opposition and the implementation of the government's instructions as well as participation in state-initiated policies, some priests were promised and given beneficial favors. Favoring some club members and harassing others, the government succeeded in causing rifts within Catholics clubs and, more recently, in imposing a Znak representation in the Sejm, which is more inclined to cooperate obediently with the Party. It did not succeed, however, in changing the attitude of the wider membership of these groups. This became especially evident during autumn and winter of 1980 when many members of Catholic clubs, particularly of Znak and Wież, were involved
in the formation of the new independent union.

The mass strikes and labor unrest during the winter 1980/81 caused the Church to develop a new function. It became a mediator between the Party and the emerging independent union. As a result, a sort of triangular relationship emerged between the Party, Solidarity, and the Church. Some observers were prone to regard it as a surrogate for, or a beginning of, a three-party system. Yet as long as the Soviet Union has a strong say in Polish affairs, the Western type multi-party system even composed of two or three parties—all accepting Soviet domination and socialism—will not be allowed. To win over the Church to its side and to placate Catholic public opinion a little known Catholic activist of Znak, Jerzy Ozdowski, was recently even appointed to the post of vice-premier, a position which bears little power in practice. Further, the government no longer prohibits building of new churches. Although the Party has not changed its position on church attendance; it does not punish its regular members for it either. And it promises more benefits to the Church if it cooperates.

The Polish Church at the Crossroads

The Roman Catholic Church is now at the crossroads. Leaders of the Church, who for three decades have led the battles and opposed the state have become quite old. Primate Josef Cardinal Wyszynski and a number of others recently died. Karol Wojtyła is in Rome. A new, until recently little known bishop, Josef Cardinal Glemp, has been appointed to the Primacy. A new generation of higher clergy is taking over. Not all of these new leaders of the Church are as strongly militant in opposition to the State as was the previous generation. Some among them feel that Poland is destined to be part of the Soviet block and nothing can be done about it. They are looking for new solutions, possibly some sort of cooperation, in which, in return for their Party's acquiescence to greater freedom for the Church, the Church would offer shepherding of the masses more to the liking of the state. Pax has been calling for such cooperation for a long time. Churches are full of believers, numerous young believers among others. But when the new archbishop Glemp called on young people not to allow themselves to be "manipulated" by
"very irresponsible people" he got two responses. He delighted the Party press, which praised him as cautious, realistic and wise. But he got also a response in the underground press, which circulates widely in spite of all efforts of the police to put it down. It referred to him as "comrade Glemp," the way one addresses the party apparatchiks, indicating contempt. As Nina Darnton reported in The New York Times Magazine (June 6, 1982): "Glemp was chosen specifically because of his ability to compromise, his political savvy and his calm and modest demeanor, coupled with his strength of character."

But youth and the workers do not wish to have a Church willing to compromise. They applaud when Glemp and other archbishops call for the restoration of civil rights and the revival of the suspended, and then finally legally forbidden Solidarity union and other dissident and opposition groups. And they turn away when Glemp or others call for a compromise and the acceptance of the existing reality which no rebellion can change. They resent the clergy deploring activities of the demonstrators even when they deplore the action of the police and the government as well.

Which road will the church take? Continue on her Julian path or choose a new Constantinian road, now under the control of general Jaruzelski or under an even more hard-headed General Kiszczak, the chief of the Polish security forces and police?

The Church is being credited for the support it lent to the opposition movement and, most recently to the workers during the stormy days of 1980 and 1981, when the Soviet army was poised on the Polish border. But critics point out that even in those critical days the Church acted quite inconsistently. A Polish writer, published in the West under the pen name B.M., pointed out that in the recent conflict the Church played the role of mediator between the state and the union, but did not always act as it did in the past, when it opposed the state. In his opinion, the Church seems to have fallen into the communist trap in agreeing to participate in the secrecy on affairs which should have been maintained public. She is being ruthlessly manipulated and misinformed by the Party and the State
administration. In these very decisive moments in Polish history, the supreme moral Authority of our nation has chosen to perform a role too small in social activities. This could have a very adverse effect not only on the position of the Church in Society but on the very fate of the nation as well.\textsuperscript{17}

This opinion is shared by Klempski (1981) and other observers. Some criticism is even stronger. Stanisław Małkowski, a priest in Poland points out in a recent edition of the Parisian Kultura

I have the feeling that our Primate seems to be more lenient toward authorities than he is toward society. How can I explain this to myself? I think that the Primate speaks to Christians as a father does and to pagans as a diplomat does. . . Besides, he sometimes treats the two quarreling sides in a way that some grown-ups treat two struggling kids. He tells that he wants silence and peace without looking into who is right and who is wrong and who started it all.\textsuperscript{18}

That is not right in his opinion.

The hidden evil must be revealed.

Poland is facing the danger of an alliance (perhaps only a temporary one) between the two authorities (the Church and the State), an alliance to be concluded above the heads of people and against the society. The authorities of the state strive for the consummation of such an alliance. Yet, they treat the Church in such a contemptible manner and society with such a loathing and hatred that, thank God, they will not be able to attain what they want. The Church is too much bound by the Gospel and with the people to commit such terrible treason. As John Paul II said 'the Church wishes to remain free facing the two systems opposing each other in the modern world; she must stand for the human cause.'\textsuperscript{19}

Małkowski warns that the Church could lose a large part of the youth and the intelligentsia as it lost various groups and entire strata in other societies when it disregarded the wishes of the people. The Church seems
to be aware of this. One day it calls for moderation in protest. The next day it calls for harmony, criticizes the opposition activists, and expresses some sympathy for the Party's predicament. Still on another day, Archbishop Macharski of Cracow or some other archbishop, or even Glemp himself, appeal to the authorities to release political prisoners and restore to Solidarity its rights and to let the people feel more free. At the end of September 1982, the Church is making such appeals to the State authorities.

Since the beginning of this century and until World War II, the Polish intelligentsia and by extension the entire nation was split into a right-wing minority following the Endecja, the centrist nationalist or Catholic-oriented bourgeois and peasant majority, and another, left-wing minority, divided into all shades of socialism. After the Communist take-over, the division into rightist and leftist and the center persisted to an extent for some time. Then, however, the Church began to play a more prominent political role as the unofficial opponent of the Party. At first the church only tried to defend her rights and domains of influence. Soon, the church felt obliged to speak up in defense of imprisoned students and laid-off workers who were protesting food shortages and price increases on essential commodities. The Church became the first propagator of detente and initiated a dialogue with the German Church on Polish-German relations when the Cold War was still in progress. Eventually it emerged in its present Julian role.

The traditional division into right and left and centrist changed as well. Both camps of the right and left became internally split. Part of the extreme right, as the example of Pax shows, now supports the ruling Party and the regime. Although the present regime claims to be socialist and employs a Marxist ideology instead of a unique derivative of conservative Catholicism and nationalism, to these people the regime represents an implementation of their own ideals. By "working from inside" and cooperating with the Party, they hope to transform it into a system which would be even more to their liking. Other rightists and nationalists, however, oppose the regime. The Left has become divided too. At first it embraced the new system. Gradually, a new dissident Polish Democratic Left opposing bureaucratic Communism came into being.
These anti-dogmatic leftists refused to be alienated within their own society. They have found new meaning in church traditions and rituals. Mostly non-religious, they nevertheless associated with the Catholic Church as the Church of the people. They discovered that they speak the same language and share many ideas as do Znak and Wieź people. They marched together in the front lines of the Solidarity ranks.

The Polish Church, then, has been forced to change. Perhaps quite unintentionally, at first, it emerged in a new role as a moral authority of all society that opposes the State, a role traditionally performed by rebels and revolutionary movements. It even won the acclaim of many left-wing intellectuals, which used to criticize it and oppose it in the past. Western observers, accustomed to different ideological divisions, are still puzzled by this situation. How could radical leftists support the conservative, although to a certain extent changed, Church? Antoni Słonimski, one of the most respected poets and writers of the liberal left in post-war Poland, who in the past staunchly attacked the Church as the mainstay of capitalism and conservatism, explained most succinctly why the attitude of the left toward the church has changed. "Before the War, the Church was reactionary and Communism represented the forces of progress. At present, it is just the opposite." Adam Michnik, a former party activist, then a rebel and advisor of Wałęsa, who is soon to be put on trial and may receive the death sentence, elaborated on this theme when he was still free. He wrote:

The history of men is a history of striving for truth. Because it is a right as well as a duty to live in truth and in pursuance of truth, those who share the anti-totalitarian concern, regardless of their nationality or religion, join forces together. The value of truth-pursuance is deeply rooted in both the Christian declaration of faith and the secular literary tradition. Both of these traditions have developed a strong concern about the growing of the State domination. Christian doctrine has developed a strong argument against the omnipotence of the State as well as against all kinds of other 'statalatrian impositions.' Analogous theories appeared in the secular literature.
concerned with freedom (one can refer to classical works by the liberal John S. Mill or to the writing by Karl Marx as exemplary on the issue). In spite of this parallel and objective convergence of ideas, in the past, Christians and writers of the secular Left did not develop a feeling of sharing of those ideas and, therefore did not join forces. This is changing at the present however.

He further elaborates that, in the present situation, when the very existence of human civilization is endangered by all-devouring bureaucracies and state-systems that transform their members into thoughtless robots who believe neither in God nor in freedom and dignity, the intellectual forces of Catholicism and of the radical left must unite their efforts in defence of more vital interests than those that divided them until now.

The Polish intelligentsia, and, by extension, the entire population is now more and more divided into two ideological camps. The dividing issue is different from the issues that divided society in the past. On the one hand, there are those who accept the omnipresence of the state, and succumb to its dictates and, on the other hand there are those who, because of their belief in God or desire for freedom and independence, reject the tutelage of the state. Those who support the state are in a minority. They have the police and the army on their side. They know, however, that they cannot trust their soldiers and the regular party members. The other minority is small too, because it is comprised of the most daring, those who are willing to go to jail, if necessary, or to die in the streets and prisons. Such people are, almost always, in the minority. The majority looks suppressed, subdued, and their concern is how to live. They are forced to work hard and they get little in return. The stores are empty. People have to stand for hours in long lines to obtain essentials. They have learned that no government in the West is going to help them. They walk in the streets at the time when the news is being broadcasted to indicate that they do not wish to hear it. They build floral crosses. They go to churches and pray. When the battles erupt in the streets, they come out. Some join those who demonstrate. The Church does not feel comfortable in this new, constantly worsening
situation and polarization of forces. It has changed in the past. It may have to change again. The press now reports that, as martial law rulers outlawed Solidarity and the underground prepares to respond with hit-and-run military operations, Archbishop Jozef Glemp, is taking a tougher stand in defense of Solidarity, the interned, and the entire terrorized and suffering population.

FOOTNOTES

5 Bohdan Cywinski, Rodowody Niepokornych (Warsaw: Wiez, 1971) p. 262.
6 Ibid., p. 263.
8 Ibid., p. 152.
10 Karol Borowski, "Secular and Religious Education in Poland," Religious Education Vol. 70, No. 1 (1975) p. 70. These and other estimates of Polish religiosity were developed with the use of a questionnaire distributed partially in Poland, partially among the emigree community in the U.S.A. and Canada.
13 Szafar, op. cit.
16 Additional information on these groups can be found in Richard Sharpless, Paul Mojzes, Stephen Lammers, "Polish Concerns, Soviet Apprehensions," OPREE, December, 1981 (Vol. 1, No. 7) pp. 1-9.
19 Ibid.
21 Ibid., p. 88.

Note: All translations from the Polish are done by the author.